

MATURATION AND MOTHERHOOD:  
BECOMING A WOMAN IN RURAL BLACK CULTURE

By

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A description of the social maturation of adolescent girls is the purpose of this study carried out in a rural, black community in Florida where family incomes usually fall below \$5,000 annually. The maturational process is analyzed as a rite of passage (van Gennep 1960) separating girls from childhood, placing them in a long period of transition and ultimately incorporating them into adult roles. The rite of passage schema is reenacted in pregnancy, childbirth and in acceptance of motherhood.

Girls activities in peer groups and in courtship reveal participation in events expressing their detachment from social status in the community. Set events (Chapple and Coon 1942) in entertainment and peer groups support girls in the pair events of courtship. The rhythm of activities in entertainment, peer groups and courtship expresses community as *communitas* or fellowship, the drawing together of personnel for a common purpose (Turner 1969). The movement of girls out of the kinship structure, into courtship and return to structure after childbirth is discussed.

The maturational process is closely related to the role of females in family and kinship. The ambilateral descent system involves

affiliation with males or females in any one generation to arrive at linkages with founding fathers who came into the area shortly after the Civil War. Land ownership and residence are determining factors in descent group membership. Girls, in maturation, loosen bonds with family and later, after claim to adult status is established through childbirth, gain adult status and become aligned with the descent system. Adult women in the descent group determine whether a girl is admitted to adult status. They are authority figures in the home and are responsible for the children in the descent group.

Adolescent behavior gives expression to community as fellowship among equals; the description of the ethnographic present explicates community as a hierarchial arrangement of statuses within stable institutions. The two forms of community enhance the analysis for when one is apparent, the other is less so. The division of labor by age and sex pervades the analysis of social structure. The economic, educational and ritual institutions are articulated to the dimensions of time, space and the division of labor in the text. Males predominate in leadership roles and in social space beyond the home while women have positions of influence in kinship, household and in child care.

The research reveals a tendency toward strong kin ties, emotional release in socially defined situations and limited access to high status positions beyond the community. Girls, having limited roles in wider society, achieve adulthood through reproduction and seek pleasurable courtship experiences. Adulthood is occasionally achieved by employment and educational successes. Whether the proportion of girls choosing education and employment to attain adult status will increase as these become more readily available is questioned.

## INTRODUCTION

This research is a descriptive study of female adolescent maturation in a rural black community.<sup>1</sup> The explication of the process of female maturation involving courtship and childbearing is the problem studied. An understanding of adolescence, a transitional phase in the life cycle, requires a knowledge of the social milieu in which it occurs. The research asks, what are the social forms in the community under study and their effect on female adolescence? What is the organization of the family and kinship system and its effect on adolescence? A description of these aspects of the social structure is necessary for a balanced presentation of the adolescent experience.

In regard to female adolescence more specific questions are raised. How do girls learn sex role and become involved in typically feminine activities? What is the social importance of courtship and peer group activities in adolescence? How does courtship affect patterns relating to childbirth and motherhood? The pattern of adolescent pregnancy, a natural consequence of courtship, is socially significant in the continuation of kinship and community. How does pregnancy and childbirth affect adolescent behavior and the process of becoming a woman in the community? Womanhood involves motherhood and assuming certain responsibilities

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<sup>1</sup>The field work is described in Appendix A.

within the family and descent group. What are the behavioral expectations of females whose adult experience is initiated by pregnancy and childbirth? What is the social value of becoming a woman in the community? Many aspects of female behavior are examined in the following pages but the major emphasis is on female adolescence.

The adolescent experience is analyzed as a life crisis in which a transition from one social position (childhood) to another (adulthood) occurs. Transitions from group to group and from one social position to another are marked by ceremonies described as rites of passage (van Gennep 1960). The rites of passage schema and theoretical formulations regarding the characteristics of liminal persona (Turner 1969) are elucidated with the research material on black adolescents. The rite of passage of adolescence has sub-phases in pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood which reenact van Gennep's (1960) schema before incorporation into adulthood. The research illustrates one application of van Gennep's and Turner's formulations which have proven valuable in the analysis of transitional states and movement of personnel in diverse societies and social situations.

This study is a contribution to the study of New World black populations. Although New World blacks have been the subject of research for many years there has been no anthropological research on the social process of female adolescence. It is useful to review other research findings before presenting the results of this research. Common themes in writings about New World and United States black populations are the limited access to resources of wider society and adaptations to marginality. Stimulated by Herskovits (1930; 1941), anthropologists have been active in research among New World black populations since the 1940's.

Models of black community and domestic organization which apply to the United States situation have been presented by Smith (1956), Gonzalez (1965; 1969) and others. The central position of the female in the domestic organization is related to the economic and political resources available to black populations throughout the western hemisphere.

Research among black populations in the United States has been influenced by the sociological tradition and the contributions of Frazier (1932; 1939; 1949) and Herskovitz (1941) although some community studies were conducted in the south in the 1930's (Dollard 1937; Davis and Dollard 1940; Davis et al. 1941). The prevailing caste system and its effect on social life was one area of interest. Powdermaker (1939) and Johnson (1934; 1941) present females as highly reproductive, influential in the family and intensely involved in the childrearing process. The study of southern blacks diminished in the 1940's and 1950's although Lewis (1955) carried out a community study among blacks in a North Carolina town.

Blacks in the urban north became the focus of research interest in the 1960's. Results often indicated that black social organization was a disorganized or deviant form of white models (Myrdal 1944; Rainwater and Yancey 1967; Glazer and Moynihan 1963; Billingsley 1968). These findings are related to Frazier's (1932) assertion that the slave heritage destroyed the family and kinship structure. However, the disorganization model was countered by anthropological research seeking the internal organization of the system through empirical, comparative research. Liebow (1967) and Hannerz (1969; 1970) describe male behavior and its relationship to the internal organization of the ghetto and the external political and economic superstructure. In urban research recurrent themes are lack of access to the resources of wider society (Hannerz 1969), poverty (Valentine 1968), linguistic and emotional expressions of the

black experience (Abrahams 1964 and 1970; Kochman 1970; Lomax 1970; Haralambos 1970). Differing interests and activities of males and females, individualism and egalitarianism are described as forms of black experience.

Research among rural black populations has been notably absent since the 1930's although Young (1970) discusses the divergent themes in the literature, field observations of children and the unique interactions patterns in a small southern town. Anthropologists have emphasized the uniqueness and internal organization of black culture.

Yet blacks in the rural south and urban north are linked by a common cultural tradition. Many of the distinctive social forms observed in the urban situation are also identified in this research. Separated male-female roles, male social interactions beyond the home, emotional release in religion and entertainment are discussed. These features are secondary to the main theme of the presentation but are of interest in the study of black culture and cultural continuity and change.

Women are traditionally described in terms of their contribution to the domestic domain and the reproduction and socialization of children. In many ways the females studied in this research conform to the traditional image of women because childbirth and motherhood are central to the female role. Yet there are significant departures from traditional formulations because these females enjoy their sexuality, seek out sexual contacts and are highly independent in the selection of partners. Females initiate action to males, behave as if courtship is a highly complex and competitive game and bring forth children to validate courtship. They have limited access to the educational, economic, occupational and political resources of society and bear economic responsibility in the

household. Females described in this research have characteristics of traditional roles including childbearing and domestic responsibility but also are actively involved in courtship and in other activities taking them beyond the home.

Anthropological tradition emphasizes the value of long term, intensive observation and participation in the field work situation and community study as a research methodology. Community is considered a sample or microcosm of culture and society encompassing social forms and cultural behavior (institutions). Part of the definition of community involves the presence of two sexes and three generations and the coexistence of personnel through time (Arensberg and Kimball 1965:16). The articulation of space, time, personnel and cultural behavior are significant dimensions of community. The concept of community as a system of personnel and institutions organized in a hierarchical arrangement of statuses is utilized to organize the descriptive material in Part I. The institutions, customary behavior and interrelations with the wider society representing the ethnographic present are discussed. Community institutional arrangements reveal the social use of space expressing the division of labor between the sexes. Characteristically males have dominant roles in community activities while women function within domestic roles.

The kinship system reveals the prominent place of women in the home, family and descent group affairs. The kinship system, similar to those described among Polynesian groups (Firth 1957; Fox 1967) is defined as an ambilateral, optative descent system. In Edge Crossing<sup>1</sup> descent through males to a founding father is preferred but linkages through

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<sup>1</sup>All personal and place names are changed.



females occur sufficiently often to be normal. Affiliation through female linkages seems to have increased in the last three generations, the possible reasons for this are discussed in Part II. The division of sex roles is apparent in kinship and community institutions but in other areas of social relations it is diminished.

The coming together of males and females in social space is a ritual expression of their interdependence and cooperation in socially defined ways. The expression of fellowship or *communitas* is seen in courtship and in adolescent behavior. The realm of adolescence and courtship with loosely defined social positions is given structure as girls become pregnant and give birth to children replenishing personnel in the hierarchy of structure in kinship and community. It is through the rites of passage in adolescence, with sub-phases in pregnancy, childbirth and acceptance of motherhood, that girls are permitted to assume definitive roles in the social structure as women.

There are, then, two forms of community relevant to the adolescent experience, one replacing the other in the passage from childhood to womanhood. The two forms of community compliment and enhance the analysis because when one is apparent the other becomes less so. Community is the sample, viewed alternately as a system of social statuses and as a body of equals bound together for a common cause.

Before describing the community as viewed internally it is useful to discuss the characteristics of the community as seen through census material and vital statistics. The demographic profile of the community is presented to establish its economic, educational, occupational and population features. The north central Florida community of Edge Crossing is about 25 miles west of County Seat, a manufacturing and farming town

with a population in 1970 of about 10,000. It is equidistant from University Town, an educational and medical center with a population of approximately 70,000 in 1970. The county experienced a moderate increase in white population and a slight decline in the black population in the past decade (see Appendix B, Figure 1). Nearly one-third of the population is non-white and about three-quarters of the population lives in rural areas.

The non-white population is characterized by low incomes, unskilled occupations and low levels of education. The population is relatively young; over 60 percent of all persons are under 25 years of age while about 40 percent of them are under 15 years of age (see Figure B-2). The high proportion of adolescents in the area is due to the relatively high birth rate and the movement of adults out of the area for economic reasons.

About half of the males and females over 14 years of age are married (see Figure B-3). Although marriage and childbearing tend to hamper educational efforts, females complete more years of education than males (see Figure B-4). The higher educational levels of females relate to the occupational structure but are not directly reflected in individual incomes. Public school teaching is the most common professional occupation in the area and females predominate. Nearly all other persons are in semi-skilled or unskilled occupations (see Figure B-5). Individual and family incomes reflect the low remuneration received in most occupations although males have considerably higher incomes than females. More than twice as many females as males had no income. Nearly one-third of all persons over 14 years of age had no income (see Figure B-6). Nearly half the family incomes were under

\$3,000 per year while an additional one-quarter had incomes under \$6,000 per year (U.S. Census 1970: Count Four).

Statistics for the white population indicate that whites experience higher incomes, occupational positions and educational levels. The statistical profile of the non-white population indicates that the development of human resources is lacking. The socio-economic level of a community is thought to be reflected in health related statistics. Although a direct relation has not been proven it is known that low incomes and educational levels are often found among populations with high infant death rates, high birth rates and other features relating to maternal and infant health.

Nearly 50 percent of non-white births are to unmarried women; among whites about 4 percent are unmarried (see Figure B-7). This dramatic difference reflects distinctive black courtship and marriage patterns discussed in Part III. Non-white women become pregnant more often and deliver more live infants but they also experience still births and infant deaths more frequently than whites (see Figures B-8 and B-9). Pregnancy occurs early in the reproductive years and the birth rates to women under 19 years of age are increasing (see Figure B-10).

At the time this research was planned and conducted (1970-1972) it appeared that, despite the greater availability of and knowledge about contraception, young women were delivering an increasing proportion of all births. Whether this will change or has changed in the recent past remains to be seen.

The process of female maturation, courtship and the significance of pregnancy and motherhood to adolescents are given expression in the

organization of family and community. The community, described statistically in terms of the quantitative characteristics available from sources beyond the community, is a low income area in which reproduction begins in adolescence. Socially, adolescence is related to the community and kinship system which requires the maturation of males and females to fill positions in the social structure in adulthood. The purpose of this presentation is to describe the social meaning of adolescence in the community.

PART I

THE COMMUNITY

A social vignette sets the scene.

Twenty youths between 12 and 18 years of age step from the school bus returning them to Edge Crossing from junior and senior high school about nine miles away. Chatting, they walk singly or in small groups in an irregular pattern as they fan out in various directions toward their own or friends' homes. Some carry purses or books, others are empty-handed, but most are fashionably dressed. Among girls sizzle suits (very short, bare-backed dresses with matching bikini panties) are popular. The boys wear brightly colored pants and shirts and floppy knit or felt hats. One girl wears a loose fitting man's shirt; on the back is an inked-on clenched fist with "Black Power" printed below it. Most of the youth have Afro hair styles, although some of the girls wear their hair straightened. A few of the boys have their hair plaited down in a style popular since longer hair came into fashion.

Jean, 16 years of age, steps off the bus wearing a short skirt and a man's shirt, bobby socks and loafers. Unlike the others, she walks down the sidewalk of the old school building and into the cafeteria where Headstart pupils eat their meals. To the cook, her aunt, she says "Hey." Then turning to two little girls one and three years of age, she watches momentarily and then speaks softly, "Hey, Tina. How you doing, Joan?" She says nothing more to her aunt, focusing her attention on the little girls. After about three minutes she picks up a diaper bag, takes the younger child by the hand and commands the older one, "Come on." They start down the path toward home about 400 yards away.

Jean takes care of the children until her parents return from work about midnight. Ordinarily her grandmother, who lives further up the path, helps her, but today her grandmother is away at a funeral. Jean is to attend school during the day and take care of her youngest sister and her little daughter after school for two more years because her parents want her to finish high school. It is her responsibility to take care of the girls while her parents are away because her grandmother is old and her siblings do not come home on a regular schedule.

Jean and her ancestors for five generations have lived in Edge Crossing. It is not mentioned on most maps of the area, but is a distinct place with stores, churches, homes, shops,<sup>1</sup> a playground and numerous lakes. The school there was closed when county schools integrated in 1967-68. Jean is involved in and affected by most of the activities in the community. She maintains relationships with her kin, her friends, the father of her daughter, and his friends and family. As a mother, young woman, student, church member and daughter, she has an identifiable role in the community.

Young women, similar in age and status to Jean, form a distinguishable social grouping and are present in most social settings, including church, school, home and gathering places beyond the home. Their roles lack definition and authority although they are responsible individuals and family members. The process by which girls traverse the years between childhood and adulthood and the social changes they experience are examined here. To analyze the social behavior of girls it is

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<sup>1</sup>Businesses providing a focus for evening social interactions are called "shops" by local residents.

necessary to understand the organization of the community in which they live and the social realities they face in becoming women. Although the purpose of the presentation is to elucidate the maturation of adolescent females, the description of the community provides a necessary foundation for the analysis. In Part I customary social forms, economic and educational characteristics of the community are described in terms of the dimensions of time and space and the division of labor. The use of space and its social meaning is discussed in Chapter 1.



## CHAPTER 1

### USE OF SPACE

Community organization and customary social forms have spatial correlates in geography, settlement pattern and housing in a community. The analysis of space use clarifies the social behavior in houses, yards, and gathering places beyond the home and permits the explication of the repetitive behavioral patterns organized around periodic temporal rhythms. The community is described first in terms of geography and settlement pattern involving the broad use of space in the community. Next, houses, yards and the schedules of sleep, work and recreation are related to domestic space and typical female behavior. Finally, male social behavior in stores and shops explicates the division between male and female domain, a recurrent theme throughout the presentation. Although male and female roles are segregated in socially and spatially recognized ways, they are related to one another in other ways. It is necessary to analyze various dimensions of the community to realize the interrelationships. We begin with a description of the geography and settlement pattern.

The residents of Edge Crossing live in clusters of houses scattered over a loosely defined area of about four square miles. The center of the community is the Crossing store (see Figure 1); the boundaries of the community become less well defined as households further from the

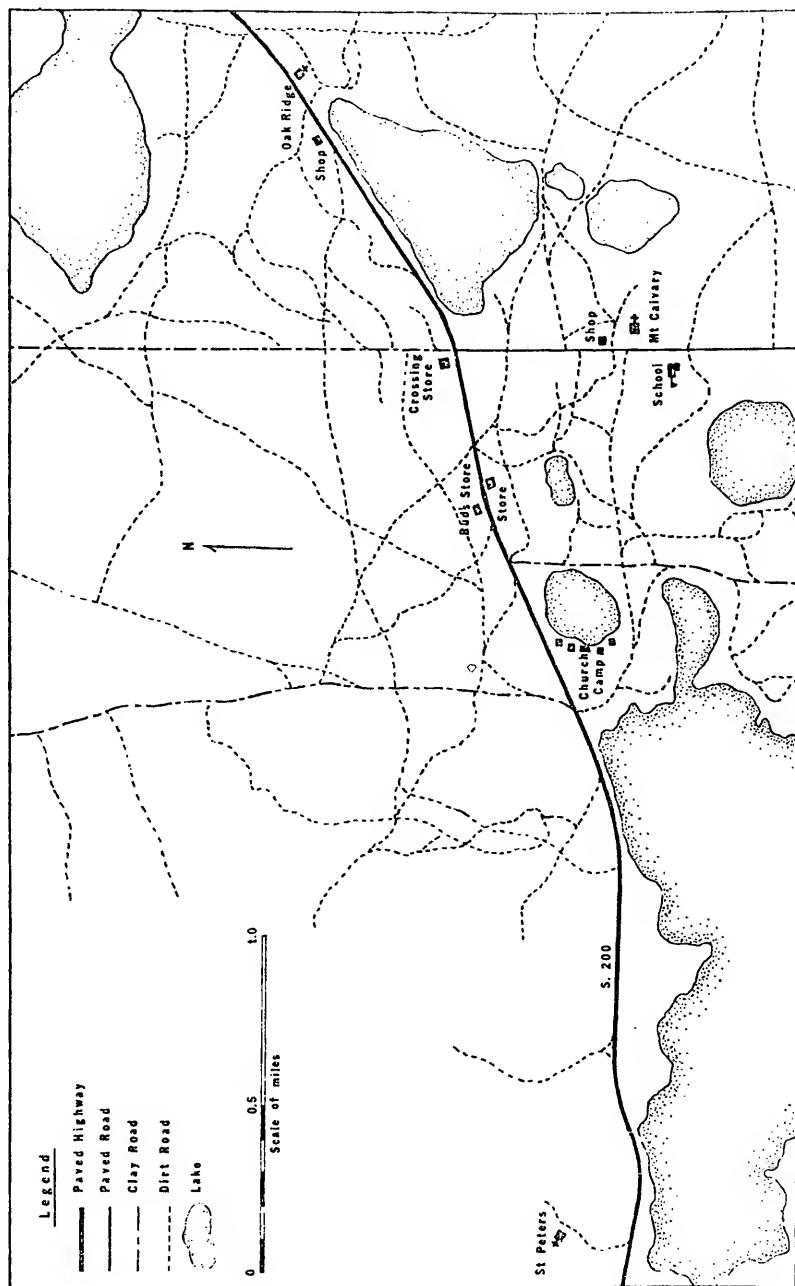


Figure 1. Map of Edge Crossing

store are considered.<sup>1</sup> Numerous lakes limit the use of space and add interest to the sandy land and scrub vegetation in the area. There are two paved roads in the community; one is a state maintained highway (S-200) dividing the community. The other, intersecting with S-200 is paved south of the highway but clay on the north. There are two county maintained clay roads running perpendicular to S-200 and innumerable sandy lanes cutting through woods and terminating in yards. Existing buildings, roads and lakes structure the use of space while land possession determines who may live or work on specific properties.

Land ownership has always been important and older persons describe the transfer of land to present families from the original settlers who came into the area shortly after the Civil War. Some of the early settlers homesteaded as much as 100 acres of land while others laid claim to considerably less. Some of the lands are held relatively intact while others have been divided numerous times after the death of local land holders. Some of the land around a lake south of Edge Crossing has been sold to whites, but for the most part, land has not transferred between blacks and whites.

Residents refer to numerous places in the community and beyond it by name. For example, Bull Lake, Mining and Greenville are all within the area defined as Edge Crossing. Then, beyond Edge Crossing are other places, equally rural, also called by name. Any person's or family's house within five or ten miles of the Crossing store can be located by

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<sup>1</sup>The area shown on the map (Figure 1) includes the area where my most important informants live.

place name, family name or geographical description. A household or family can be located in space because they are near one lake or another, near a particular road, or bend in the road, on a specific clay road, near a relative's home place or near a store or church.

There has been a gradual increase in the population of the community. Older residents say that people live everywhere now; when they were young there were "woods everywhere." A definite movement of homes and persons toward S-200 has taken place and a tendency to build homes near the lakes and along county maintained roads is noticeable. One of the attractions for moving nearer good roads has been the potential for mingling with others.

All gathering places are located on the two paved roads. The three stores, two shops, three churches and the old school building are within two miles of one another. The events which occur at schools and churches are explored in later sections. The rhythm of activity at the stores, shops and homes provide insight into the social use of space in the community.

#### Houses and Yards

The house and yard provide a focus for numerous individual and group activities including eating, resting, sleeping, care of clothing and bodily needs, child care and the exchange of money and information between members of the household. Life in the home is usually shared with persons related by blood or marriage and includes persons from two or more generations. Before examining customary social behavior, a description of the dwellings and their furnishings clarifies the boundaries within which domestic life takes place.

Houses vary considerably in age, design and location reflecting the adaptations in construction through decades of time. Four distinctive house types and their relationship to one another reflect the temporal development of settlement pattern through generational time. The most uniform house type is the older home, built about 50 years ago. A front porch leads into a living room where one finds a low light level and an assortment of overstuffed furniture protected by fabric throws. An archway divides the living and dining rooms with the kitchen lying immediately behind the dining room. Most homes have running water, but sometimes when another house is located nearby water is obtained from the pump servicing the other house.

Two or three bedrooms run parallel to the three main rooms of the house with curtains or doors separating the bedrooms from the other rooms. In many cases the front porch, back porch and bathroom were added after the original house was built. The construction of older houses took place as materials, manpower and financing became available. Often a man living in the house, a husband, brother or son, is the greatest contributor to the construction and maintenance of the house.

Within older houses there are usually ornately framed photographs, taken early in the century, of elaborately attired persons in ascending generations. School pictures and snapshots of younger relatives are displayed. They are placed under glass on a coffee table, clustered under one large glass-covered frame or placed about the house in a more random fashion. Most of the older houses have a glass-paneled china cabinet where stacked or standing dishes are displayed.

Older houses and some of the furnishings, including the china cabinets and old pictures, have been passed intact to the current owner from previous

generations. These houses are distinctive for several reasons. They are rarely painted, are sometimes covered with tarpaper siding, are almost identical in floor plan and have a wide assortment of old pictures and furnishings of sentimental value. Older homes have been added to, repaired and remodeled over the years without altering the original floor plan.

The second house type, those of moderate age, constructed 15 to 25 years ago, are weatherboard sided, have more variety in floor plan, are usually painted and were contracted through the same construction company. These homes do not have as many old pictures or china cabinets unless older women have moved into them from older houses. Often the older, abandoned houses are left standing next to newer ones and used when several visitors or kinsmen visit at once. The bathrooms in homes of moderate age are incorporated in the original floor plan but are sometimes not yet installed. Nearly all homes have kerosene furnaces which are moved into the living room during the cooler months but are on the front porch or in an outbuilding during the summer.

Newer homes, constructed in the past 15 years, are a third house type. They have more variation in interior floor plan and exterior appearance, are nearly always constructed of concrete block and usually have a functioning bathroom. Nearly all homes have pictures of President Kennedy, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. The three may appear in a group picture or John Kennedy and Martin Luther King may appear with their families. These heroes as well as religious articles adorn the living and dining room walls but are sometimes found on bedroom walls.

Lake front property is popular among younger persons; nearly all lake front homes are less than 15 years of age and are usually owned by

married couples who have worked several years building or sub-contracting them.

Sometimes lake front property is combined with the fourth house type, the 12-foot wide mobile home. Women admire mobile homes because they are clean, neat, ready for immediate occupancy, are easier to finance than a house and can be parked on property owned by relatives. They are fully furnished and need little maintenance when they are new. Persons who own houses often state that they wish they had a mobile home because they are so spacious and pretty. Actually the houses are larger in living area than mobile homes. Houses have approximately 1,000 to 1,200 square feet of living area, but this is not immediately perceived by local admirers of mobile homes. Women who have tried to raise children in mobile homes often say that they found them too small for several children and they long for a "real" house.

A combination of house types are often located near one another so the households function almost as one unit. These arrangements are created by two or more houses located within 50 feet of one another or a mobile home being blocked up within ten feet of an established house. Mobile homes permit greater flexibility in household arrangements than do houses because they can be located to meet the needs of related families and removed when no longer needed.

Housing located in close proximity and possessed by related families permits the households to function cooperatively. Cooking, child care, laundry and sleeping arrangements alternate between the households.

Clustered houses, cooperating in various ways, are usually owned by related persons who obtained a portion of the family land from older relatives on which to build a home. In some cases, transfer of land

title occurs, but the adult sons and daughters are usually permitted to use family land until the death of the parents then the land becomes part of their inheritance. The housing patterns and the way they are grouped over the land is related to land possession and tenure, discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

Housing in the community reflects the adaptation to construction methods developed over the years but the spatial orientation of housing indicates the importance of kinship and land possession. The interiors of the homes are adorned with the artifacts of family life in Edge Crossing mirroring the age and interest of the residents. The yards surrounding the houses are all similar in appearance and function.

Outdoor space surrounding households throughout the community is an extension of the home. The sandy yard extends no more than 200 feet around the house before brush and undergrowth take over. When other houses are situated nearby, the yard extends around them. The front yard is bounded by a road or lane which provides automobile access to the house. Cars park in the sandy driveway; inoperable ones are positioned to the side or back of the yard for parts, storage or want of a better place. Foot paths, worn through the sparse vegetation in the yard and heavy underbrush beyond it, lead to other houses visited frequently by adults or playing children.

The sand in the yard is usually raked every few months to clear away trash accumulating from the activities that take place there. Lawns are not popular; buying a lawnmower or paying someone to mow the yard seems unnecessarily expensive to most residents. Potted plants and flowering shrubs are arranged in the yard, primarily around the front porch and at the base of trees. Many yards have fencing on one or more



sides; this and other lines strung from trees and posts are used for drying clothes. A garden plot beside or behind the house is often planted in vegetables for home consumption. Oak and pine trees provide shade while citrus, pecan and fruit trees serve the dual function of shading the yard and producing edible foods.

Chairs or benches placed beneath the trees or against the house are often in use. Visitors or family sit outside taking advantage of the breeze or the privacy that the outdoors provides. Men often stay outdoors smoking, drinking beer, talking and napping while women are inside cooking, cleaning, talking and watching television. In rainy weather, yard activities are transferred to the front or back porch, spatially drawing male and female closer, but their activities remain segregated.

Preschool children, restricted in their play to the cleared area of the yard, leave their possessions lying about it. Dogs, cats and sometimes pigs, enjoy the cool of the yard in a usually hot climate. The yard is an extension of the house and is usually a place where men spend some of their time resting, thinking and interacting with others. Women, who tend to spend their time in the house, organize the temporal sequence of activities of the house and yard.

#### Domestic Patterns

The daily household routine is organized to meet the human needs and routines of a variety of persons who are usually periodically absent from the home on a regular basis. The very young, very old and some women spend nearly all of their time at home while adult males, who often have more than one home in which to eat, sleep, maintain a wardrobe, and take care of biological needs, do not. The household pattern, organized around

the needs of participants, is described through the daily activities that occur there.

The daily routine starts when children rise at 7:00 a.m. and get ready to go to school. Often older adults, however, who have accustomed themselves to retiring early, rise at daybreak. Since the sleeping of most adults fits to their work schedule, they are often asleep when the children arise. The female head of the house usually gets up to see the children off to school and prepares breakfast for pre-adolescents. Some students prefer to prepare their own breakfast and others go without. If the woman is at work or has to sleep, a grandmother, aunt, high school age sibling or cousin, or another woman living nearby attends to the needs of younger children in the morning.

After the children are out of the house other adults rise and are usually up by 10:00 a.m. Some have already left for work or to run errands by this time. The social, occupational, and educational schedules require that the household routine be flexible.

A meal is prepared around 10:30 or 11:00 a.m. by an adult female in the household. If the female household head is absent she leaves the food on the stove or directions for its preparation. The morning meal usually includes coffee, light bread and grits. Pork cooked with peas, or bacon, or pork chops, or eggs or fish are usually included in the menu. When the food is ready plates are served by a woman to those present and the meal is consumed in the living room, kitchen, dining room or under a tree or on the porch. Family members position themselves for comfort, the desire to be alone or to talk. Rarely does everyone sit together at a table. In fact there are often too many persons present to share available table space. When members of the household come in during the

meal or later and inquire about food they receive a plate, prepared by the woman. Friends who come in during a meal are usually not invited to share the food.

Children under three years of age are usually fed from the plate of an adult woman although all adults offer little children food when they approach. Children over three years of age receive a plate and often sit at the kitchen table supervised by an adult female. After the meal is eaten the plates are usually abandoned where the meal was consumed, although women tend to take their plates to the kitchen.

Later, a woman gathers the dishes and glasses scattered around the house and takes them to the kitchen where they are washed and placed in a drainer, or dried and replaced in a cabinet. Women attend to various chores after the meal -- straightening the house, making beds and sweeping floors. Clothes are washed at least weekly and usually more often. Sorting, folding and ironing clothes is a routine housekeeping task which women perform for husbands, small children and old or infirm members of the household. While women are engaged in housekeeping men sit talking to others, drift from the house, go to the Crossing store, to work, or to take care of business.

After household chores are done women usually spend several hours watching television, visiting and tending to the needs of preschool children. Women usually have a small group of friends they see once or twice a week or one or two friends they see daily. They receive visitors informally in their home, walk to a nearby house, or if they have a car, they drive to the store to buy some items and then go to a friend's or relative's house. Women enjoy talking to other women about community news, children and men, and do so by visiting or extensive use of the

telephone. Most homes have a telephone which is in frequent use, particularly by adolescents. Telephone conversations vary from about ten minutes to two hours or more in length. There are many interruptions from children, television and little tasks, but the content of the conversation is such that interruptions do not interfere with the information transfer.

Another popular pastime of women is keeping up with the "stories," television programs which are broadcast from about noon until 4:00 p.m. Women, sitting on the edge of their seats, blocking out all other stimuli, concentrate on the "story." They discuss the events, predict outcomes and take sides with characters on the screen during the commercials. Adolescent females hurry home from school, prepare a snack, rush into the living room and join others involved in the program.

The television serials, similar in function to radio "soap operas" of a generation ago, are ". . . symbol systems which are closely related to the private and public worlds of the women who listen" (Warner 1962: 255). The "stories" express women's feelings that their role is both difficult and dangerous. They sacrifice constantly for home and children and have to guard against unscrupulous females who use every trick to attract "good" men away from established obligations. Housekeeping and child care are important responsibilities of women but are incompatible with keeping men sexually contented. The stories present problems with which the women can identify although the leading personalities depict different life styles.

When the younger children come home from school, around 4:00 p.m., there is a lot more activity and noise in the houses and yards. Children

from several households play or go to the store together. Children in elementary school do not usually have established responsibilities at home other than taking care of themselves but in some households, most of the housekeeping is reserved for older students, nearly always females. They are responsible for the routine housework after school and on weekends. They care for young children, wash clothes, iron, sweep and mop the floors, burn the trash, cook and rake the yard when needed. The distinct division between the activities of children and adolescent females, discussed fully in Chapter 8 and Part III, demonstrates the different status of children and adolescents.

A second meal is placed on the stove in mid-afternoon and eaten when children and adults return to the house at dusk. The meal, eaten between 6:00 and 9:00 p.m., is usually served later in the summer when daylight lasts longer than it is during the winter months. The meal is served in a fashion similar to the morning meal but usually more persons are present. When family members are absent at mealtime some of the food is left on the stove for them to eat on their return. Rice and chicken pieces, greens with pork, macaroni and cheese, peas and pork and fish and various vegetables are often prepared. The dishes from this meal are sometimes not washed until morning if females in the house are tired or are going out.

Most people enjoy the usual diet and identify with its designation as "soul food." One of the most significant aspects of "soul food" in Edge Crossing is that there is always plenty of it. One does not stop eating until a firm, tight feeling in the abdominal region is experienced. The preparation of greens, peas and other foods usually takes between two

and four hours. The variability in time allotted for preparation of foods and eating contributes to the casual organization of household routine.

When the evening meal is finished some family members 'wash up'<sup>1</sup> or retire early and wait until morning to bathe. Other family members are intently watching television. Babies have either gone to bed or are tiredly moving from one lap to another. Points beyond the home, shops, stores and homes of friends have drawn adolescents and adults away. When visitors are in the house they engage in watching television, talking and playing with the little children. Men often have not yet returned home for the evening, but when they return they eat, watch television and retire. The most consistent persons in the house during the day and throughout the evening are adult women but they sometimes visit others in the evening if someone is present to take care of young children.

The activity in the house is at a low level by 9:30 or 10:00 p.m. because most of the children are in bed. One or two persons sit half-sleeping with the television as a talkative companion, but by midnight they have retired. Depending on where they have gone, those who have been out come in between 10:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m. and go to bed. The late hours that men and many youth keep accounts for their lack of initiative in the morning and staggers the activity level in the households through the day, evening and the night.

Household activities are organized so that individuals with interests and responsibilities away from home can meet them while fulfilling their

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<sup>1</sup> Bathe from a basin of water.

needs at home. Household functions are carried out in a highly flexible manner but lines of authority are clearly defined. There are no tasks that are so strictly allocated by sex that they cannot be performed by either males or females although most tasks are routinely done by women who usually delegate responsibility to younger females and sometimes to adolescent males. Authority rests with an older female, in some cases the oldest female is too old or sick to maintain control. She usually abdicates her role to a younger woman, usually a mature daughter who assumes the position of authority.

The female authority figure in every house is identifiable through her behavior in her home. Often two or three women, each having a house "to boss," cooperate and share numerous household functions, lightening their "load." The sharing of work, goods and personnel between related houses is common in all households and a daily pattern in others. When two or more women cooperate to perform household tasks their time is more flexible, permitting freedom to engage in activities beyond the home but they do not forfeit their authority within their own house. The daily sharing of goods, food, child care and other functions between three households is illustrated in the example below.

#### Domestic Transactions

Maxine, 72 years of age, heads one household; Brenda, her 45-year old daughter, another; and Linda, her 27-year old granddaughter, a third. The three women share child care, food preparation, laundry and ironing, transportation and other functions. Their interactions reflect the flexibility of household function and composition.

The three women live within 150 yards of one another and visit daily. One of Linda's sons, eight years of age, sleeps, eats and keeps his clothes

at Maxine's but spends most of the day with his siblings at Linda's. Brenda usually lives alone but her brother Joe (Maxine's son) lived there after he left his wife. He slept at Brenda's and ate at Maxine's until he moved in with a girl friend.. Brenda is seldom at home because she works two jobs. Maxine frequently prepares food for herself, Douglas (Linda's son) and Joe, who stops in occasionally. Brenda and Linda often give Maxine food because she is on an income under \$100 per month and she returns some of the food to them when it is prepared. The three women often eat together in the morning at one of their homes. Since Maxine's health is not good, Linda and Brenda often prepare food for her and check on her in the evening. Maxine often does Brenda's washing and ironing and periodically takes care of Linda's older children when Linda works. They in turn, provide transportation and various services for Maxine.

#### Domestic Interactions

Related households often operate almost as one unit, movement of personnel between houses is without formality. Clothing, food and some other goods are transferred with little regard to ownership. It is sometimes ambiguous where one household unit ends and another begins in terms of the functions and personnel of the household. The reciprocity between the three households described above is not unique. Women usually have relatives or friends with whom they regularly share goods and services.

The activity level in many households is very high as relatives and friends of various ages move into and through the house. Often there are few adult male participants in the household activities because men have other places in which to spend their time but they usually eat and sleep in the household to which they are most closely identified.



Sleep and work remove most men from household activities. Male students are often involved in sports requiring practices and games, and also work part-time jobs. Often the most active male participants in households are retired or in poor health. Men spend their free time interacting with other males in set events<sup>1</sup> and with females in pair events<sup>2</sup> in various locations beyond the home.

Men customarily spend their time beyond the home but have a recognized responsibility to the household. Women spend their time at home and have definable roles in the male domain beyond the home. Their activities reflect the spatial arrangement in the community and the traditional division of labor. Although both men and women work in capacities beyond the home, the customary division of labor permits women to exercise authority and independence in the homes and allows males to express their social position and importance in community institutions beyond the home.

Women recognize the tendency of males to congregate, talk, drink, play games and spend their time away from home. When men are away from home women say they are "in the streets." If a man is spending most of his time with a woman his family will state that he is "in the streets." A man's activities away from home are not completely known to his family. Their lack of information is a protective mechanism because it shields his activities from scrutiny and gossip.

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<sup>1</sup>A set event is defined as an event between three or more persons in which one person originates to the others (Chapple and Coon 1942:706).

<sup>2</sup>A pair event is an event between two individuals (Chapple and Coon 1942:705).

Men who have stable marital relationships spend more time at home than others but are still "in the streets" regularly talking at the Crossing store, having a beer with friends, or attending to various part-time occupations. Although men do not spend much of their time at home, they are respected when they are there. Older children become somewhat quieter and subdued when they enter the house. Men play with and talk to children under three years old but spend little time with older children or adolescents. Women usually acknowledge the entry of their husband or adult male offspring. Married women often keep their husbands' desires in mind when they plan to be away when he returns. They plan meals to be prepared by others or leave food for them.

When men and women interact there is considerable non-verbal communication because "people talk with their eyes." When a man comes into the house more glances than words are exchanged. Women can tell what kind of mood their "man" is in by looking at him. Married women say that trying to keep a man happy is a "hard thing to go through with." They study his various weak points and learn to use them to achieve certain ends. Women do not back down when challenged by a man, especially in the home. Many women accuse men of not treating them fairly and trying to manipulate them by withholding money. It is a point of honor with women not to let a man "hard time" them. A woman will enlist the help of other women for child care and take a job to prove to a man that he cannot make her do whatever he wants. Women agree that they will always "be out ahead" of men because "while men sleep women think." In the home it is apparent that women are authority figures who strive for harmony to maintain a home for their children.

At some points in the system males are more clearly dominant. Stores and shops, the domain of males, are spatially separated from households but the use of space in these locations has similarities to spatial arrangement in the house and yard. The analysis of social interactions throughout the community indicates that buildings are the focus of social gatherings but exterior space is customarily integrated into the social patterns. Houses are the focus of typically female behavior where men have socially defined roles. The stores and shops are male domain and women have limited roles. The spatial distance between typically male and female domains reflects their role segregation. Because stores and shops differ in certain respects they are discussed separately, later their similarities and differences are compared.

### Stores

The three stores in Edge Crossing serve an economic function and are important meeting places beyond the home. Stores are ordinarily open six days a week, including Sunday, and are not open in the late evening. The stock in stores includes various grocery items which are purchased for household use. In addition, beer, wine and snacks may be purchased for immediate consumption. The clientele ranges from children about three years of age to the elderly.

Children around three years of age ordinarily purchase candy while older children purchase items for the house and snacks. Adult women buy odd items that were not purchased during monthly shopping trips into one of the towns. Some men spend a large portion of the day at the store sitting or standing and talking to one another and to women and men who pass through the store.

Two of the stores are operated by whites, one has been under continuous operation for more than 20 years by a man who has a reputation for being surly and noseey. There is considerably less visiting at his store than at the others although he carries a more varied stock of grocery items.

The store at the crossing (see Figure 1) was recently purchased from another white owner by a couple from South Florida who talk and joke with the men spending the day there. They take time with little children coming in and are liked by most of the community. The Crossing store is the major meeting place and geographically is the center of the community. On Sunday, there are as many as 25 cars parked in front of the store and as many as fifty people, mostly men, standing around outside talking. Women say that men cannot get along without the "crossing" and remark on the number of men there "loafing."

The Crossing store has a limited number of grocery items but a large supply of beer, wine and soda. There is a covered porch in front and chairs are placed along the wall. A table and chairs are on the lawn beneath a tree to the right of the building. Men sit beneath the tree and talk or play cards. To the left, a smaller building houses a pool table, on the door there is a sign stating, "Positively No Gambling" in bold, red paint. The Crossing store is a long, rambling structure, the owners live in the back half of the building.

Bud's, the black owned store in the community, combines a filling station and barbeque with the usual beer, wine, soda and snack operation. Bud does not stock a large number of grocery items so there is more space on the interior of the building. A juke box, two pool tables and two tables with chairs are inside. The pool table is often in use during the day.

Bud works a full time job and employs Alvin, an older man, to spend the day at the store collecting the charges for gasoline and the beer that others drink. Alvin is usually sitting in front of the store talking to two or three other men but sometimes the store is closed when Alvin has other business. Bud tries to run a "tight operation." There is a pay telephone station near the cash register, beneath it is a sign stating, "This is a business phone. Please limit your calls to three minutes." Another sign warns that those using profanity on the premises will be prosecuted. Sometimes a group of adolescents play the juke, dance and talk at Bud's. In some ways, Bud's is as much like a shop as it is like a store. One of the main distinguishing features is that it is not usually open late in the evening.

Stores and shops are both male dominated, community gathering points. The most important difference between stores and shops are the reasons people go to them. Shops are organized to bring males and females together in a socially defined situation. Males engage in some of the same activities in shops as they do at stores but take advantage of opportunities to become involved with females. In stores and shops, women are customarily subordinate, and relate to males within socially expected parameters.

### Shops

The two "shops" in Edge Crossing (see Figure 1) are similar in appearance and function to businesses throughout the surrounding area catering to entertainment needs in the evening. The plain, but painted building usually has no signs indicating that it is a place of business,

although the clay or sand parking area indicates that there is considerable activity there. During the day there are rarely cars parked outside although one can sometimes go in and buy beer or snacks if the owner,<sup>1</sup> who lives in a house nearby, is around.

The interiors of shops are very similar. The building is one large room with a storage and service area in the back set off from the rest of the room. In front of the service area is a partition as high as a man's waist. The cash register, cooler, snacks and other merchandise are arranged on the counter and along the wall on shelves. A screen above the partition separates the merchandise from the customer. If a person wants a pickle or crackers, he can not serve himself because the screen prevents him from doing so. He asks for what he wants and receives it when he pays for it. By leaving the front entrance and going to the back of the building, bathrooms are accessible but males often relieve themselves beside the building.

In the rest of the room there are pool tables, small tables with one or two chairs, a juke box and space for dancing. These features practically explain the activities which are concentrated on weekend nights. Up to 50 cars are parked in front of the shop and people stand indoors and outside talking. Soul music resounds from the juke and couples dance to its throbbing rhythm. Music with a fast beat is more often heard than the slower tunes to which couples "slow drag" (stand facing with bodies touching from head to toe and moving in rhythm to the music every other beat). The floor and walls seem to vibrate to the

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<sup>1</sup>Most shops, including the two in Edge Crossing, are owned and operated by blacks.

beat and those not dancing are moving some part of their body to the sounds. A pool game is in progress at the same time; players move to the beat of the music except when bending forward to shoot. Beer is purchased and drunk; others bring their own bottle and buy soda for mixer. Some do not bother with the mixer. For the most part participants are women between 15 and 35 years of age and men from 15 to 50 years of age.

At the shop persons of the opposite sex meet, business deals are made and everybody acts the way they feel. It is also an important node in communication networks. Persons from other communities come to talk and hear the news. There is considerable travel between shops; cars filled with men, women or both go from shop to shop in other localities looking for the best action, meeting new people and finding out, generally, what is going on and where. Individuals and groups travel over two counties to a place where they hear that something interesting is happening. Often a band with a good reputation is playing and people from a radius of 100 miles or more attend. Even if the reputation of the band is not outstanding people go to hear it if nothing more interesting is happening closer to home.

The activity in the shops is fast moving. People meet, talk a while, like one another and move out to find more privacy. Often events which have occurred away from the shop are brought to a head and worked out. Consequently, quarrels which have been brewing between men or women over a member of the opposite sex are resolved by a show of force. Disputes over business or money matters are brought out in the open. When fighting, shooting or knifing occurs the police are sometimes called. Most shop customers try to avoid contact with police. They do not want to serve

as witnesses, and less still do they want to be taken to the station. They do want to know what happens so they can relate their version of it to others. When it is clear that the police will be called, or that one may be shot as an innocent bystander, the shop becomes vacant within minutes.

The stores and shops in the community are meeting places beyond the home where information is exchanged and a high rate of social interaction is expected. The congregation of personnel in stores and shops is one expression of ritual in the community focusing on communication and courtship interests. Sports events and religious activities are also ritual occasions, they are discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

The use of space and social forms in stores and shops, dominated by males, and in female oriented homes demonstrates the division between male and female role that prevails in Edge Crossing. The use of space provides males with legitimate claim on public areas while permitting females independence in private areas. In each of the areas discussed here, land use, houses, yards, daily patterns and social gatherings, males and females function independently. Yet the division of labor is such that they are dependent on one another for the coordination of routinized activities. The realm of work and finance explicates the interdependence of male and female and the realities both face in the white dominated economy.



## CHAPTER 2

### ECONOMICS

The need for cash income requires that most adults enter the white dominated economic system and obligates them to participate more fully in the economic institution of the wider society than in any other institution. The demands and expectations of employers and creditors conflict with the needs of community residents for income, recreation and social relations. Youth express disdain for occupations traditionally available to blacks, but, older persons, admitting that life has been filled with hard work, look back with satisfaction on modest achievements.

The articulation of community residents with the economic system has changed through the generations and various adaptations have occurred. Within the past five years alterations in employment policies resulting from civil rights legislation have opened some opportunities to youth that were unavailable to their parents. Yet, finances remain a problem for everyone. Women and men experience similar problems in the wider economic system and cooperate more fully in economic endeavors than in other areas. In this section the economy related adjustments made by adults, the problems of entering the job market faced by youth, and the customary allocation of resources are discussed, but first, the social and historical events resulting in the current economic base are presented.

### Brief Economic History

A fundamental knowledge of farming and a need for success were characteristic of persons who initially settled in Edge Crossing. Although the land did not produce abundantly, the crops and natural resources provided for the families living there. Corn, cane, sweet potatoes, collard greens, 'bonk' peas, watermelon, okra, squash, cucumber and other vegetables were harvested. Plums, oranges, tangerines, pecans, pears, peaches and peanuts were also available. The primary meat source then and today is pork. Hogs are relatively economical to raise and once slaughtered there is little waste. Although some people kept a few milk cows, beef has never been a preferred meat. Other sources of protein in the area then and now are fish, gopher (a tortoise), cooter (a water dwelling tortoise), rabbit, squirrel and chicken. Corn was ground into meal at a mill about four miles away and made into hoe cakes and cornbread at home. Flour, rice, textiles for clothes and liquor were among the few items ordered from stores five miles south of Edge Crossing.

Men and women worked side by side in the fields during peak work periods and food was taken to the fields and prepared there in cast iron kettles over fires. An older woman said that meals cooked in the fields seemed to taste better than any food she has ever eaten. Much of the routine farming work was accomplished by women and youth. Mines were located about three miles south of Edge Crossing where the men, working ten to 12 hours a day, dug out and transported onto rail cars a fine, white clay. Some of them worked there long enough to draw retirement and do so today.

The emigration of young adults began in the 1920's and 1930's and continues today. Young men and women went to northern cities, including

New York and Washington, D.C., to live with relatives or friends and seek work. When they became established they sent for siblings or other relatives. Although family members were gone for decades, they maintained ties by letter, telephone and messages sent through vacationing relatives. Northern cities and relatives continue to attract youth although a greater proportion of them are now settling in Florida cities. Everyone says that the reason that young people leave Edge Crossing is the lack of jobs, but some leave for other reasons also.

In the 1940's and 1950's adults acquired transportation and were able to commute to University Town or County Seat to work. They were often able to find jobs that didn't require the arduous mine labor or the back breaking work in the fields. As this trend became marked people quit farming in earnest. They bought their food and "come out ahead," at least in terms of physical labor. Some older residents, looking back with nostalgia, say that although times were good, no one would go back to farming or the mines which closed a few years ago.

Employment beyond the community brought various changes in economic arrangements but the traditional pattern is maintained. Males usually work far away from home. Women contribute to the economic resources of the household through paid employment but their primary identification is with family and household.

#### Finances in Edge Crossing

Economic arrangements reveal the impact of the wider society on the community, the division of labor and patterns of employment during the life cycle. Mature men and women bear the major responsibility for bringing economic resources into households and the community. An analysis

of patterns of employment and economic responsibility of males and females reveals the division of labor and the spatial arrangements associated with economic pursuits.

Because there is no permanent, full-time employment available in the community men and women work in the neighboring towns, primarily in the large health care and educational complexes in University Town. More jobs are available in University Town than in other towns in the vicinity and employment networks operant in the community lead most persons to positions in University Town. Extensive travel, about 50 miles a day, is a requirement for most employment adding more than an hour to the eight to ten-hour work day.

Males have a wide variety of occupations clustered around custodial, construction and farm work. Some men's employment requires staying at the work site, permitting them to return to Edge Crossing only on weekends and during periods of unemployment. Women, employed in jobs reflecting their expertise in household management and child care, work as domestics, custodians, nursing assistants and in cafeteria service. The division of labor is reflected in the occupations of men and women and in their roles in the household and community.

Neither men nor women have high incomes but men fare considerably better in wages than do women (see Figure B-6). Men are usually more regularly employed than women and often work at more than one occupation. Although the four school teachers in Edge Crossing, all female, probably have the highest incomes for persons working one job, men often have full-time jobs and various part-time occupations. Women, restricted to employment expressing their domestic identification, often work part-time or temporarily. Personal and family economic crises resulting in

unmanageable debts often cause women to enter the work force. When the crisis is resolved, bills paid, or incomes from males or welfare established, they quit work. Some, working as domestics in nearby communities, have held the same part-time positions for years.

Employment in the wider society reveals several patterns in the community. Permanently employed men and women work in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations and receive low remuneration for their efforts. Women maintain stronger ties with home, more often work part-time or temporarily and work in positions related to their traditional roles. Males are more actively involved in economic pursuits in the wider society, have more varied skills than women and pursue more than one occupation at a time. Everyone finds it difficult to cope with jobs and often "get hot" (angry) about the demands of employers. Usually residents have few alternatives in employment situations when they feel wronged. They can leave the job, blow up and beat the offending party (frequently discussed but rarely done) or quietly do the job as demanded. Sometimes they chose to leave the job, "just walk off" but in most cases they do as told to "get along." Work frustration is prevalent and everyone knows that he has to "bit his lip to get along" sometimes. These patterns express the traditional division of labor in the community and the spatial and social separation of the wider society with community process.

Within the community the resources gained through employment are distributed to others in part-time or temporary employment. Household budgets and redistributive patterns among kin are discussed here. Women usually have only one paying occupation which may be located in the community. Baby sitting at the rate of \$2.00 per child daily, is one source of income for women whose household responsibilities or personal

involvements prevent other employment. In many cases women too old to be in the work force or having children of their own, take care of children. Payment for baby sitting is in cash, goods, services or a combination of the three. Although income from baby sitting is not high, there are few expenses associated with it.

Another source of income requiring greater financial investment is transporting persons. Transportation is an expensive necessity for those who do not have adequate incomes to maintain automobiles. Women who own or have access to cars "carry" persons for payment. For example, every woman needs to go into town at least once a month to "trade" (grocery shop and pay bills). A ride into University Town or County Seat costs \$5.00. The rate drops to \$2.00 for a trip to the smaller towns about six miles away. Although most employment is in University Town, most women "trade" in County Seat because food stamps have to be obtained there and most of them have long standing accounts in stores there.

The state welfare department is a source of income directly available to some females (and a few males) in the community. Many people prefer to stay off welfare because welfare workers ask too many questions, make too many demands and periodically threaten to discontinue the payments. But others find welfare less troublesome and more dependable than the work they are able to get and they make their peace with the intrusions of welfare workers. There are several sources of welfare income in the community, including aid to dependent children, disability checks and old age assistance. Aid to dependent children is the most prevalent and amounts to about \$55.00 per month per child. Disability income depends on the percent disability allowed by the state while old age assistance is about \$85.00 per month.

Welfare recipients are also eligible for food stamps, stretching income at the grocery store. Women often receive food stamps even though one or more persons in the household are employed because the family income is low, dependents numerous and they meet eligibility requirements. Children in most households are eligible for free lunch programs. Women exploiting income opportunities in the community are restricted to sources that permit other responsibilities to be met. Baby sitting, transporting persons for payment and welfare are among the most important.

Men, unrestricted by domestic responsibilities, often work full-time and have other sources of income. They have extensive personal networks into neighboring black communities resulting in various part-time occupations (called "side hustles"). Construction work, sale of fish, farm products and delivery of goods to points beyond the community are occupations resulting in cash payment. Males' and females' incomes are distributed into household budgets and into various personal networks.

In household financial arrangements there is an emphasis on males giving money to females. When assistance is not freely given, women assert their independence of males, take jobs and "get along" without them. Ideally married couples collaborate on a household budget, but, in fact, men keep as much money as they need and give the rest to wives, girlfriends and mothers. Women rarely know the exact amount of men's pay because men receive cash from various sources and cash the check from their "steady" job. Cash, in amounts up to \$20.00, frequently transfers among adults. Males often contribute to more than one household, giving between \$10.00 and \$50.00 per pay period to a mother or girlfriend. When

they are married their gifts to other women are reduced and more money is given to their wives. Generally, women acknowledge a man's responsibility to his mother and expect him to "give her a little" from each pay check.

Men, who usually have more money than women, are usually gift bearers, but women frequently assist their boyfriends or sons when they are "short." Older women, typically dominant household heads, receive cash from several persons and lend "a little money" to younger relatives when requested. The pattern of reciprocity involves males giving cash to various women who, in return, provide housekeeping, laundry, meals and other favors. Women receive cash from a variety of sources, including sons, fathers, husbands, boyfriends and their own employment and mastermind the family budget.

Household budgets focus on payment of the bills for electricity, telephone, mortgage on homes, groceries and accounts at stores where clothing and other goods are purchased. When only the man in a home is working he gives part of his pay to women (wife, mother or girlfriend) to pay the bills. Working women, who receive some income from males, first pay the bills mentioned above and usually spend money on clothing, household furnishings and entertainment.

Financial worries are cited among the reasons that most men and women feel the need to get out of the house and have a "good time" on the weekend. Paradoxically in some cases a major portion of the weekly income is spent when men and women go out, drink and forget their troubles for a few hours. Nearly everyone agrees that if you don't forget your troubles once in a while you "go crazy" and that is worse than being "a little short" at the end of a pay period. Most women who have "a house



to boss" do not go out very often and are very responsible about their financial obligations, including helping kinsmen when they need assistance.

Despite careful planning there are often economic crises that require cash transfers greater than the small amounts that are customarily exchanged between friends and relatives. Major economic crises are handled through short term loans from relatives and are usually repaid within a month unless different arrangements are made. Major economic crises include travel expenses, car repairs and car payments and are usually paid in cash.<sup>1</sup> Financial assistance of various sorts is usually expected among kinsmen. It is expected that when assistance is freely given that the receiver will "do something" for the giver in due course. Parents and grandparents customarily help their children, and siblings provide assistance for one another for major purchases including "getting a place to stay" (a home). In some cases, financial aid extends to cousins, nieces and nephews, but usually dependence is upon closer kin.

Economic arrangements in the community involve part-time employment for males and females, an emphasis on males giving to various females in a highly individual way, older women receiving funds from their children, the budgetary role of women, and men as providers actively involved in economic pursuits in the community and beyond. In the community it is expected that men work, and bring their earnings into the community to be shared with others. Women maintain home, function with a budget based on income, plan for major purchases and work when necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> In the community the economy is based on cash. A few persons have savings accounts but checking accounts are almost unheard of.

The economic responsibilities of men and women differ in the life cycle. It is always men's responsibility to work, although the allocation of their resources depends on courtship and marriage. Females, on the other hand, have more varied responsibilities, and their needs undergo considerable alteration through life. Young women often depend on males they court, welfare and periodic work. Women usually enter the work force full-time in their thirties and remain employed for many years. Women tend to stay at home when they have two or more small children there but work before childbearing and after the oldest child is in adolescence. When they are old they become "too tired" to work full-time and usually return to housekeeping in a home of their own. This is possible because older women usually have a variety of income sources including regular gifts from their mature children. Males do not become the nodes of resource allocation in the family as often as women, but women who understand the problems of working in the wider society, value the efforts of males who earn incomes and respect their wishes in the home.

There have been some changes in the economic opportunities available to blacks but older persons think only in terms of the traditional, low paying positions they have had. Most adults in the community, still employed in these same jobs, have adjusted to them and have little motivation to seek other positions. Younger persons, however, often desire prestigious jobs that do not require long hours or hard physical work. However, most adolescents begin their working lives in the community and later enter the job market in the wider society. An analysis of adolescents experience in the job market reveals the problems faced by most community residents.

### Adolescents and the Job Market

Adults tend to protect adolescents against the realities of employment because they feel that work in the wider society is an unpleasant necessity of life. Most youth try to move into job opportunities in the wider society after they leave school, but are employed first in the community. High-school-age students work at the church camp grounds (black) when it readies for summer opening and are paid about \$10.00 daily. They rake leaves, clean cabins, repair buildings and do some building construction. The Office of Economic Opportunity program in the community employs about 20 adolescents in the summer to clean the school yard and supervise younger children in the summer educational program. These jobs are welcomed by youth but their earning capacity is restricted.

Young persons seeking employment in the white dominated economy encounter numerous problems. Many high school graduates stay at home for several months or a year or more before securing employment outside the home. Fifteen students who graduated from high school in June stayed in the area but none were employed by September. By December, four had secured jobs and two of them had already quit working. Most youth have difficulty finding a job that they want to keep.

Finding a job is a complicated procedure requiring the use of a car, a means of learning about suitable job openings and the self confidence to deal with potential employers. Each of these are difficult for young persons who often fail civil service or state examinations required for employment they desire. Most youth desire positions to which they assign prestige, such as office work or in sales. They do

not want to be custodians or day workers as their parents have done. Aspiring to positions for which there are few precedents in the community makes their search more difficult. Many positions, particularly as waitresses, are not readily available to blacks. The curt, negative responses of prospective employers cuts into their youthful pride. Fear of failure is compounded by it. Many an enthusiastic high school graduate's hopes are dashed against the reality of discrimination, inability to perform on standardized tests and parents who tell them what kind of employment they can get.

For example, Dean felt an urgent need for a job immediately upon graduation in June. She enlisted my help in locating one at the end of May. My role was to take her to various locations where she had heard about openings or to answer advertisements listed in the University Town newspaper. We set out one morning; Dean was filled with high hopes. Before we returned late in the afternoon she had responded to 18 advertisements and leads. She applied at the Veteran's Administration Hospital as a nursing assistant, at the University as a nursing assistant and clerk typist and a wide assortment of food handling and office positions in town. The University and the V.A. required exams and she scheduled to take them a few days later.

By August, Dean still did not have a job. She failed the civil service exam, and took the state exam twice unsuccessfully. When she applied for waitress positions she was told that they had already been filled or that they would call her. Yet, the ad would run in the newspaper for several days more. Dean and I spent all day answering ads and trying to decide what she should do next on three or four occasions. In September she asked me to help her look for a job "one last time."

She was responding to three ads for waitresses. At the first two places they told her that they had already filled their vacancies. I waited in the car as she went into the third restaurant located on one of the main streets in University Town. It was a large, well maintained and served moderately priced means to a clientele of high school students and university personnel. Dean returned to the car in about ten minutes with a job. I do not consider it coincidental that the restaurant manager was a "soul brother."

Dean worked happily at the restaurant for four months. Eventually, three factors resulted in her leaving the job. She was committed to taking care of her sister's baby while her sister attended school, she became sexually involved with her boss and did not want the relationship to conflict with work and she wanted to visit friends down state frequently for several days at a time. By the end of March, following her graduation nine months before, she had not located a job compatible with her other responsibilities and interests.

The personal lives of many young women are complicated, contributing to job instability. After a few years of switching jobs, staying at home or working part-time some women find a job that fits their wider life style. The cafeteria and kitchen at the University Hospital employs a large number of black women, including about ten young women from Edge Crossing. They pool transportation resources and have developed esprit de corps on the job. Working in the kitchen has certain advantages although the pay is low. These women keep up with community members in the hospital as patients and perform various services for them.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For example, a young, pregnant woman from Edge Crossing was hospitalized, placed on a low sodium diet and served eggs. In the presence of visitors she said, "Now how you think I eat egg and no salt." Within five minutes a cafeteria worker, a community resident, appeared with several packets of salt. The meal was consumed with proper flavoring.

Working with familiar people and seeing various acquaintances passing through the cafeteria makes work interesting. Job training takes place after hiring so that those who quit may be rehired there because they do not have to be retrained.

The process of finding and keeping a job is difficult because it requires dealing with the demands of white supervisors and adaptations in personal patterns. Many people find the necessity of working, hard on their nerves and do not remain at one occupation for over six months. The fear of failure and the possibility of it are great and, consequently, most Edge Crossing residents adjust to jobs which demand far less than their potential.

The economic system in the community is ordered by the division of labor by sex and age. Women tend to remain in the home whenever possible and determine the budgetary allocations in the household. Males have the responsibility for bringing economic resources into the community. Economic arrangements in the community are spatially separated from work in the wider society. Working is an unpleasant necessity so the resources of those who cope with the system are valued. Youth, relatively unfamiliar with the system and encouraged by civil rights legislation, are often dismayed at their failures. They often adapt, as their parents have, to jobs requiring much less than their potential.

Economic problems faced by most residents are partly a result of the social organization of the wider society which has held blacks in low paying employment situations. Youth usually have little preparation for encounters in white society prior to employment and some of their problems arise from the employment related skills they acquired in youth. An analysis of the educational system describes the impact of formal

education on youth in Edge Crossing and suggests some of the reasons they have difficulty obtaining jobs they want.

## CHAPTER 3

### FORMAL EDUCATION

The use of space, economic arrangements and social forms discussed in earlier sections indicates that Edge Crossing is a community having relative independence of and integration into white society. Most residents in Edge Crossing have contacts with whites in formal economic arrangements separated from their own social and family life. These patterns, traditionally enforced by whites, are accepted by local residents who function within the permissible limits of the situation. The economic condition of the community results, in part, from community residents fulfilling available economic positions and the limited access to the educational and economic opportunities of the wider society. The lack of access to these resources is related to, but not wholly a result of, the educational system and the community's utilization of it.

In Edge Crossing most learning occurs in situations separated from the formal educational system. The important lessons of life are learned in the home and community but the schools are the avenue through which skills to attain jobs valued by youth can be learned. The learning environment offered by the formal educational system and the articulation of children and youth to it are discussed in this chapter. The focus is on education in schools and school related events rather than on the home, a later focus. The structure of the system is discussed along with the activities of students in the system.



Schooling, as a process separated from home, has a long tradition in Edge Crossing. Students attended class three months a year in a church building around 1900. By 1925, there was a school building in the community located near the Crossing store, successively replaced by two others over the years. Currently the school building reflects considerable neglect from the county. Broken windows remain unrepaired, the septic system does not function properly and the heating is often deficient. Informants say that maintenance has always been a problem.

During the 1960's, there came free choice, the opportunity for black students to attend all white schools. Not one of the parents in Edge Crossing chose to send their children to the white school. Parents explain that they wanted their children close to home while at school and that the community school was satisfactory. It is also clear that they did not want their own children breaking racial barriers or being scorned by their black friends for being too good, "uppity," for attending a white school.

Complete segregation continued until eliminated by court order in 1967-68. Elementary students are bussed to a school seven miles northwest of the community while junior and senior high school students attend school about nine miles to the southeast. The white school south of Edge Crossing is closed and the students attend school with students from Edge Crossing.

The formal education system, as it affects the children of Edge Crossing, takes them away from the immediate locality for most of the day during many years of their youth. The only exception to this is the Headstart program which has a classroom in the old school building. The

voluntary program, in its fourth year of operation, is designed to give four year old children experience with a learning environment before the school years. Application must be made for children to enroll in a program whose benefits are not apparent to all parents. Breakfast, lunch and a wide variety of learning experiences are provided for the students.

The class of 20 students is instructed and cared for by a teacher and a teacher's aide. Volunteers, parents and interested persons are invited and encouraged to come into the classroom and participate in the activities. The teacher and teacher's aide, both black, live in County Seat but are well prepared culturally, educationally and temperamentally to work with the children and their parents. There is a cook who prepares the meals for the students, a custodian and a driver who transports the children to and from school. All three are local women.

Headstart regulations require that classes be integrated. Each year the teachers are worried that requisite numbers of white children will not apply. There were four white children in 1971-72 and two in 1972-73. The tasks which the class focuses on initially are fundamental but often not learned at home before enrollment. The children are taught to wash their hands, brush their teeth, blow their noses and cover their mouths when they cough, speak when spoken to, and to look at the person to whom they are speaking. The teachers encourage them to bring their problems to their attention instead of crying, biting, hitting or kicking other children. The teachers speak softly to the children, encourage the very quiet ones to talk and subdue the more

boisterous ones. In the course of the school year the students master many tasks and have new experiences. The Headstart program is the first experience children have with formal education. Later, they attend school beyond the community and learn to cope with teachers and school situations which are considerably different from the experience provided for them in the community.

Students from Edge Crossing attend school and socialize to a limited extent with white students. According to blacks in the community there is harmony at school although problems develop occasionally. Black students protested because "soul" music was not played at school dances. One afternoon a bus driver wouldn't permit black students to board the bus. This caused an uproar by students and about 30 parents who confronted the principal. The bus driver quickly relented. However, local students, teachers and parents always stress that integration was in no way a difficult adjustment. They say that they have always known white people and have gotten along well with them.

People in Edge Crossing place an emphasis on "getting along." One often repeated formula for getting along with anyone is to "be agreeable." If you cannot agree or do not approve of someone's behavior, stay away from him as much as possible. Blacks use this formula whenever they interact with whites.

The black students attend school, go to school events and mix with whites while they are there. Blacks participate to a great extent in extra-curricular activities, especially sports events and dances. Football, basketball and baseball games played on Friday nights are well attended by all age groups in the community. Everyone knows the local

boys on the teams, their parents and their families. They cheer, socialize and talk to everyone else at the game. Clusters of blacks and of whites sit in the same bleachers. There is considerable talking and joking among white and black youth but not much contact between the adults.

The approximation of behavior of white and black youth was highlighted at one football game which Greg, a graduate and former football player, attended. He exuded school spirit; his voice carried well and he cheered often. He climbed up on the bleachers where about 150 persons, black and white, were seated. On the field an important play was about to be made. Greg faced the seated crowd, raised one fist in the air and shouted, "Is you ready?" The crowd responded, "Hell, yes." Greg reflected for a brief moment, hand over mouth, then changing the words but not the message, he yelled, "Are you ready?" The crowd noted the change, laughed and responded louder, "Hell, yes." He repeated the two forms of the message again, receiving a more enthusiastic response each time, then went on to lead the crowd in the rest of the cheer. Greg, like many of the youths, notices the difference between white and black behavior, including language, and sometimes modifies his behavior.

Sports events, emphasizing the masculine role, contribute to the unity of blacks in school sponsored events, and in local communities. Teams made up of males ranging from 15 to 45 years of age play other teams from neighboring black communities on Sunday afternoons at the community playgrounds. Players are widely known and highly praised for their abilities. Community members, particularly adolescent girls and young women with children, attend the games and cheer wildly when

local players make decisive plays. Ball games associated with school draw a more varied crowd, the entire family leaving home for an evening to mingle and interact with others. The ritual behavior at sports events, stores and shops expresses male dominance and female support in public areas. The roles of males and females in ritual is also dramatically revealed in religious ritual, discussed in Chapter 4.

Ball games and other ceremonial events such as graduations and dances are the main events which attract attention to the schools. The emphasis placed on sports stands in contrast to the interest in the academic curriculum. Most students are not particularly interested in academics and say so. Their parents do not usually expect them to excel in school and do not encourage too much study. I have been told in all seriousness that too much "study and looking in books" can disturb children's minds and cause them to lose "what little good sense" they do have. The curriculum is not appealing to students and there is little effort to adapt classroom instruction or to involve students in academic endeavors outside the school situation. Most students are content with mediocre grades, and often stay at home or skip school one day every week or so. Students stay at home when the opportunity to work for pay arises, a sick sibling or relative needs attention or something unpleasant is expected at school. Figures for the nearby high school indicate that in 1972, more than half the black freshmen drop out before high school graduation but only one-fifth of the whites drop out.

Although youth lack enthusiasm for the public school curriculum a considerable number of them enroll at the junior colleges in University Town or County Seat. Attending junior college to learn skills and knowledge to secure a "good" job is attractive. At junior college

financial aid is often available, and they may live with friends or relatives in town or commute daily. Some of them become interested in some part of the curriculum and go on to finish college. Although there is little emphasis on academics in the community educational levels are not uniformly low. Over one-third of the adults in the area have finished one or more years of high school and a tenth of them have attended college.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, nearly four times as many females as males have one or more years of college. Often college educated persons begin higher education at a nearby junior college.

Youth attending junior college meet students from town and the entire junior college district. Relationships are widened, alternatives for entertainment are increased and leisure time is spent in a greater variety of places. The youth in junior college participate less in community activities, although they keep up with local people through occasional social interactions, peers who live in the community and relatives. Still, admission to junior college may be the first step toward moving into town, getting a more satisfying job and lessening interactions in the rural community.

Many young women who choose to go to junior college take a business course. They aspire to clerical jobs in which they can dress fashionably, meet the public, receive relatively good pay and work in clean, pleasant surroundings. Others, who want to become teachers, plan to continue their education at the nearby state university or attend the predominantly black state university located about 150 miles to the northwest. Youth usually aim toward more prestigious and lucrative occupations than those of their parents but give serious thought to the necessary skills and knowledge after public schooling is completed.

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<sup>1</sup> Drawn from Figure B-4.

Formal education provides many experiences for students otherwise unavailable in the community. It is both an avenue of access to jobs outside the community and an introduction to white people and values. Students are adept in informal interactions with white peers but usually socialize with blacks. Social patterns present in the formal educational system resemble those ordering social life in the community.

Previous chapters examine distinctions between typically male and female behavior in space use and economics. Consistently, females identify with household and children and males with community life and economic endeavor. These divisions are given expression in education through the emphasis on sports. The relative lack of interest in academics is consistent with prevailing social patterns because men and women value customary sex and occupational roles and do not stress academic excellence. The pattern relating to males in highly visible roles in the community is repeated in ritual behavior. Religious ritual, discussed in the next chapter, is dramatically expressed in church services. Periodic community rituals reaffirm the bonds that community members share and draw members from all social categories together to express their unity.

## CHAPTER 4

### COMMUNITY RITUAL

In earlier chapters community use of space, economics and education is discussed. Although males and females fill different roles, various events bring them together, expressing their interdependence and resolving minor differences that arise through time. The attendance at and participation in sports and shops are presented as group events enacting patterned male and female behavior. Events, bringing large segments of the community together, are rites of intensification reinforcing and intensifying customary status and role. In this chapter rites of intensification<sup>1</sup> in the religious institution are examined.

Religion is characteristically supported by symbols, setting off conditioned responses in participants and rituals, those patterned behaviors bringing the group together around common belief and practice. In religious institutions group symbols and ritual behavior promote restoration of equilibrium to groups which are unbalanced by disruptive interaction sets in other activities. Religious ritual, often carried out in a definitive social space, draws representatives of all personnel in the community together and reaffirms the bonds that hold them together.

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<sup>1</sup>A rite of intensification is ritual performed in response to a crisis which arises from changes affecting all members of a group in concert (Chapple and Coon 1942:706).



Religious rituals in Edge Crossing are customarily carried out in churches, separated from other institutions in the community, with a schedule of rituals following the weekly, monthly and annual calendar ordering other activities. There are three Baptist churches in the community, each with its own history of development and a different minister. Their spatial separation (see Figure 1) belies the inter-relatedness of the churches and the interdependence of the members but they are reflected in the ritual calendar. Mount Calvary (see Figure 1) has services on the second and fourth Sunday of each month. On the third Sunday of every month, St. Peter's has a service. Oak Ridge has services on the first Sunday in the month. During months having a fifth Sunday, the churches rotate the services among them.

Church is the place where men, women, adolescents and children come after relating with one another through the week in schools, homes, stores, shops and work. Drawing members of all ages and from each institution it promotes harmony and good will among those who compete with one another, are separated socially or spatially, or grow weary of constant interactions within the same group. Church is socially neutral; participants behave in accordance with the symbolic and ritual traditions passed from generation to generation, and seek communication with their fellows.

Ritual expression in religion does not attract everyone in the community. Women, especially older women, tend to attend church and participate in the services in greater numbers than men. However, leaders, ministers, deacons and ushers dominate the ritual. Although children are usually equal in numbers to the men and women present, they participate in a limited way. During all services, except on fifth Sundays,

the choirs are composed of ten to 20 adolescent females and one or two males. The congregation reflects in many ways the activities of community members during the week. Males, who engage in their ritual in stores and shops, do not attend church in great numbers, but those who attend are in dominant roles. Adolescents, who enjoy song and dance, supply the music. Women assure the attendance of children and sit in the front seats of the church where the minister and other leaders initiate action directly to them. The personnel participating in the ritual express customary behaviors and roles, but much more too. Earlier, the function of religious ritual was said to be a rite of intensification; as an example, the fifth Sunday ceremony is examined in the following section.

#### The Fifth Sunday Ceremony

Ritual activity begins at the church each Sunday when Sunday school convenes at 9:00 a.m. or shortly thereafter. Between ten and 20 persons gather in the church building and segregate themselves according to age. Adults sit on the right of the church, older children in the middle and youngsters on the left. Prayer and a scripture reading are led by the minister unifying the group for the expressed purpose of getting to know themselves and sacred powers better. A discussion of the weekly lesson, taken from a publication of a Baptist organization, is led by the three Sunday school teachers. The minister is the teacher for the adults, a retired teacher instructs the children and another female school teacher takes charge of youth. The teachers read scripture, question their groups about its meaning, adapt their comments to the age

level of their groups and offer interpretations of the lesson's meaning. A collection is taken up, the money counted, the amount reported and the secretary's and treasurer's reports read. Another scripture reading by the minister and a group recitation of a prayer terminate the ritual.

The organization of Sunday school reveals the age categories in the community, their unification in ritual and the use of ritual symbols, including prayer and scripture from the Holy Bible. Sunday school is a communion of the faithful because only a select few attend, returning each week. The minister asserts his leadership over the select few by initiating and concluding the ritual. Sunday school is similar each week but fifth Sunday church service is a revealing ritual in the community. The structure and function of the fifth Sunday service is analyzed first, before discussing the district choir and church associations.

By the time Sunday school is over, between 50 and 75 cars are parked outside the building. People stand in groups talking and others move inside taking seats and talking in hushed tones. The women are fashionably dressed, wear makeup, hats, hose and jewelry. Men and boys wear suits. At 11:15 or 11:30 a.m. the choir sings a song signaling the beginning of the service and those outside move into the church.

Women and children take seats in the center front of the church, males tend to remain in the rear, near the doors and some of them do not enter the church at all. The ministers and deacons assume seats facing the congregation and await the end of the hymn. During the service the choir, an active and highly visible body, is located directly behind the pulpit. The leaders of the services, the deacons and ministers, are always male. Occasionally women serve as ushers but the few deaconesses have no active or visible role.

The service begins after the opening hymn with the congregation and minister reciting alternate lines of scripture. A collection of pennies, nickels and dimes is taken up in baskets passed by the ushers.<sup>1</sup> Introduction of visitors, church and school events in the coming weeks, deaths and invitations to visit other churches are made by the minister and members of the congregation. The announcement of events in several counties reflect the communication function of ritual gatherings. The introduction of visitors (who are always considered prospective church members) legitimizes their presence and participation in the ritual.

The hymns, prayers, collection and announcements set the mood of the congregation for the sermon. The visiting minister, from one of the churches in the district, is introduced by the regular minister who cites his good works and dedication to his people. During the preliminaries, persons talk quietly, entertain children and pass babies from one to another, but when the sermon begins a hush falls over the group. Noisy children are quietly and quickly taken outside and everyone focuses on the minister. The sermon lasts about 30 minutes and varies in content from week to week. All the other parts of the service serve to augment the effect of the sermon.

The minister begins speaking slowly, standing in the pulpit, his voice carries through the group as he pauses after each phrase. He takes a recent event, personal experience or biblical passage as a starting point to demonstrate human frailty and the power of the

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<sup>1</sup>The collection helps finance the annual Sunday school convention held in the district. Note that there is an annual ritual calendar of events other than national holidays.

supernatural. As the sermon takes form his voice becomes louder, he gesticulates with his arms and the pauses shorten. His voice becomes emotional; the congregation begins to participate with feet tapping to the rhythm of his voice. "Amen," is heard from scattered members of the congregation. Momentum builds in the sermon, the minister gestures with his arms as he paces across the elevated platform behind the pulpit. The pauses between phrases become shorter and sounds like "Ah," are inserted where pauses had been. Everyone focuses on the minister, following his movements with their eyes. Feet tap and heads nod to the rhythm of the minister's speech. "Yes, Jesus," and "That's the truth," are exclaimed by members of the congregation.

The sermon continues to increase in cadence and volume. The point being made is that belief in Jesus Christ can lead to everlasting life in heavenly bliss. It is the will of God that all sinners repent, become baptized and join the church. Finally, the minister is perspiring, wiping his brow, gesticulating wildly and pacing across the elevated platform. Abruptly he stops, apparently near collapse. The church is silent. A deacon rises, picks up a straight backed chair, places it in front of the pulpit and stands behind it. Rarely, someone is moved to act on the message of the minister and comes forward to join the church.<sup>1</sup> Ordinarily, there are two or three minutes of silence before other activities begin.

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<sup>1</sup>The convert stands facing the congregation with downcast eyes and is questioned by the minister who ascertains the prospective member's name, whether he has been baptized and whether he is a member of another church. Persons can change church membership by letter rather than be baptized by immersion again.

The minister initiates action to the congregation through symbolic themes with which they identify. The congregation as a group focusing on the symbolism provided by the church, the minister and belief, give expression to their commonalities. The mood established by the sermon with the minister initiating action to the group is altered following the sermon. Then, various individuals rise and initiate action to the minister and the congregation, reversing the order of action established in the sermon. They touch on the symbolic themes of the sermon and crises in their own lives. Individuals resolve crises through initiation in set events and experiencing the support of the group.

Persons who want to "testify" begin speaking slowly, and build up to very active bodily movements and speech. Moving about in front of the pulpit, they bear any kind of message.<sup>1</sup> When they become intensely involved another person, usually an older woman, rises. The assistance offered is physical evidence of the support they receive from their peers; the silence and attention of the congregation is mute testimony of their importance. The older woman follows behind the speaker, saying nothing, wiping her brow, removing eyeglasses or physically supporting her if needed.

After one or more spontaneous expressions a prayer is offered by a deacon who reiterates the essence of the sermon and interprets it in terms of personal experience or recent events. A deacon who becomes intensely involved in prayer is helped back to his seat by another deacon and sits in a relaxed, slumped position for several minutes

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<sup>1</sup>Difficulties with finances, alcoholism, spouses and children and the solace and help found in relying on the Lord are common themes.

before looking upward again. Most members who are moved to speak are older women and they are assisted by women. But deacons are supported by men, maintaining the prohibition against intimate physical contact between the sexes in religious ritual.

Becoming involved in the sermon is an emotional experience. The participation of the congregation with the minister creates a feeling of oneness with God and fellow man. Church members say that they go to church to "unburden," to "let go," to feel "close to God." They are "moved" to say and do things expressing their true feelings. The release of emotional energy is an exhausting and relaxing departure from the control demanded by everyday life. It restores interaction rates by focusing attention on commonalities and similar status before sacred powers. The prayer and spontaneous expressions maintain the mood of the congregation but lessens its intensity before moving on to more mundane matters.

The second collection taken after the prayer expresses the importance of each individual's contribution and the active participation of visitors. A deacon often chooses a visitor to assist a church member with the collection. The two people selected by a deacon stand behind a table near the pulpit, facing the congregation. Singing, the choir walks in rhythm to the music down one aisle of the church, around the last pew in the rear of the church and back up the other aisle. Then, each member places his contribution on the table and returns to the choir area. The ushers indicate to the congregation which sections are to follow the path of the choir past the table and back to their seats. Some persons have money they need changed. The persons behind the table count the money, make change and separate the bills from the change as it is placed on the

table. Everyone, including the ministers, makes a contribution. The two persons counting the money satisfy themselves that they have made an accurate count; they compare and come to an agreement. The one of them states, "Thank you for the \$72.95."<sup>1</sup> After a short prayer is said over the money the two return to their seats,<sup>2</sup> and the collection is taken to one of the back rooms of the church where a deacon guards it from theft.

The manner in which the collection is taken demonstrates the importance of each individual in the congregation. Their participation and contribution is central to the ritual. The collection returns the congregation to the realm of worldly responsibility and identification with status and role. The mood set during the sermon is dissolved as people talk again in hushed tones. After the collection the choir sings, there are closing prayers and announcements and people stand, talk to one another and leave the church.

The church service provides for the release of tension built up during the work week and renews bonds of friendship which weaken in the absence of interaction. It is a rite of intensification drawing together spatially and socially disparate entities and expressing their symbolic unity. The use of space within the church and the order of action

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<sup>1</sup>The amount of the offering varies. On fifth Sundays the collection is substantially higher than on other Sundays when it ranges from \$18.00 to \$30.00.

<sup>2</sup>The amount of the collection sometimes depends on the collector's skill. If there is, for example, \$22.15 collected, a bid for contributions amounting to \$23.00 is made. The money is collected by ushers and placed on the table. Then, there is a little over \$23.00, for example \$23.25. He makes a plea to make it a "nice even \$25.00" He continues requesting money until the congregation produces no more. Many people feel that there is too much emphasis on money and resist pleas for added contributions.



reflecting the dominance of males, contributes to the symbolism to which the group responds.

The restoration of interaction rates and the renewal of social energy is incorporated in the ritual. The process is further developed in the activities after the church service. The analysis of these activities reveals the importance of religious ritual in maintaining equilibrium and social communication between individuals, families and communities.

The fifth Sunday service permits various ritual specialists to perform their customary roles for a large group drawn from a wide area. The behaviors of these specialists and their ritual relationship to community process are discussed.

#### Ritual Specialists

Ministers and deacons lead religious rituals and draw participants together through identification with commonly perceived symbols. Deacons are always church members, community residents and are the ritual representation of community males. Ministers, however, are not community residents and are chosen by the membership for their ability to communicate to the group and to relate to their symbolic representations. The unifying function of the minister in ritual and in the arbitration of disagreements is enhanced by his social and physical distance from the community. The pattern of ministers living in communities separated from the ones in which they preach suggests that they function as cultural brokers, enhancing the flow of information, goods, services and fellowship among the communities in the area.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Black ministers in black communities are consistently described as leaders (Dollard 1937, Davis et al. 1941).

On fifth Sundays their leadership role is supported by the district choir which facilitates the communicative potential of the minister and functions independently to maintain communication among black communities in the area.

The district choir is made up of persons who live in the six counties making up the north central Florida district of black Baptist churches. There are several large towns in the district, but most of the choir members live in small communities. The members travel as far as 100 miles to practice in different homes or churches in the district and attend services where the choir is scheduled to sing. The choir is widely known for "good singing" and for its choir director, who literally puts his whole body into music. Many people attend church for the opportunity to see and hear them perform.

The formal requirements for district choir membership are the payment of membership dues of \$5.00 per quarter and attendance at practices and services. There are an equal number of men and women in the choir totalling about 30 persons. At services they wear long blue choir robes and mortar board hats. The members range from about 30 to 55 years of age. Most of them have positions of status including many school teachers. The equally active role of men in the choir, as contrasted with local church choirs, is a reflection of male roles in community activities and personal networks extending to black communities over a wide area. Although women are authority figures in their homes, they are able to allocate responsibility so that they can sing in the choir. The make up of the choir gives expression to the networks of communication binding black communities in the district together.

Exchange of information of almost any sort travels through these networks. Information originating in a home in Edge Crossing travels through the wider communication network to nearly any other household in the district. News about job openings, fishing, evening entertainment and sports travels from one community to another. Once in a community, the information travels to other households there. Information of a personal sort, including babies, marriages, shootings, knifings, law troubles, illnesses and deaths are also transmitted along the networks reaching widely separated persons.

The composition, activities and networks of the district choir express the social function of religious ritual. The social aspects of church attendance are important to all church members. The exchange of information and mingling with others contributes to the feeling of unity in the community. The district choir is a collective representation of various communities that participate in fifth Sunday services.

#### The Ceremonial Meal

The fifth Sunday service is a collection of guests representing spatially separated communities who ritually enact their oneness. The role of local residents as hosts to all the participants is expressed through the activities that follow the service and continue into the early evening.

After the morning service a dinner is served by community women who each bring a large container of food. The menu provided is similar to the usual diet but because of the large number of persons involved there is greater variety. Women who are active in church work, including deaconesses and deacon's wives, take charge of cleaning the kitchen,

receiving the foodstuffs and keeping the food warm. After the service they hurry into the kitchen, don aprons, remove hats and serve the plates.

The partaking of food and the organization of the meal is highly symbolic. The participation of all expresses in a different way the cooperation and communication of the group. The contribution of foodstuffs from many community households links the ritual to the family and kinship structure and expresses the supportative role of women as nurturant, sustaining figures in the community. The collection of foodstuffs under one roof and its redistribution to the participants reflects the symbolic significance of resource sharing and subsistence seen in household community. The role of males as community and ritual leaders is seen in the seating arrangement according to status. The highest ranking members of the religious organization, the ministers, deacons and choir, are served first and seated in the church dining room. All other persons eat outside placing their plates on cars or balancing them on their hands.

During the repast, the participants talk, see old friends, renew bonds, discuss children and interact with a large number of persons in pair events. The pair events and social interactions reinforces the effect of the service (a set event). The morning service, the dinner and the afternoon service<sup>1</sup> all serve the same function but are enacted in different ways. The reduction of hostility, communication among

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<sup>1</sup>After the dinner another service is held at 3:00 p.m. It is similar to the morning service but there are fewer participants. There is no encompassing concluding ritual, participants begin leaving after the morning service and by the end of the second service the leaders and a handful of the faithful quietly go home.

equals, the expression of oneness, social support of the male and female role are expressed.

Ritual expression in Edge Crossing explicates social forms found throughout the community institutions. The division of labor, the dominance of males in the community, the nurturant sustaining roles of women, the strength of adults in relation to children are all demonstrated. In addition the emphasis placed on redistribution of economic resources, the relative lack of economic excess and the acceptance of emotional expression in socially acceptable forms is evident. Ritual provides a forum for the symbolic expression of community norms and values and clusters them in a circumscribed space where both sexes and all ages of personnel participate. The temporal rhythm of ritual intermeshes with the activities of participants in institutions throughout the community and beyond.

## CHAPTER 5

### PART I CONCLUSIONS

The chapters in Part I are devoted to the analysis of Edge Crossing in the ethnographic present. The community is described in terms of space use, economics, education and ritual expression in which recurrent themes order the lives of personnel in the community. Personnel basic to the community, including both sexes and three generations, use space, time and the division of labor reflecting customary social forms. The use of space is organized first by natural features including lakes, woods and buildings, but space is also organized to reflect social patterns. Households, where personnel fulfill biological and social needs; stores, serving economic and social functions; and shops where both sexes meet and mingle, are spatially discrete entities. The use of space give expression to the segregation of typically male and female behavior and their necessary interdependence produced by the division of labor.

Just as males share female oriented space and households, males reserve for females position in their social space. Stores and shops, dominated by male activities are a form for male-female interaction where females behave in socially defined ways toward males. Domestic space and household operations are female oriented. The distribution of males' economic resources to females in various households reserves for them an esteemed position in female oriented space.

Space and time define locations and rhythms for social activities. The rhythms in homes, at work or school and group events occur on daily, weekly, monthly and annual cycles and each occur in a spatially circumscribed place. The temporal rhythms of work or school are punctuated by rites of intensification restoring equilibrium, expressing community unity, reestablishing the division of labor and symbolically drawing residents together. The distances between communities and individuals in the rural areas around Edge Crossing are lessened by the social linkages among them. Communication between communities is formalized through fifth Sunday services, the district choir, ministers, ball games and activities in shops.

Rites of intensification occur on a weekly cycle, in the shops, at ball games and most inclusively at church services. Religious rites, spatially separated from customary male and female oriented space bring community personnel together, both sexes and three generations. The participation of all categories of personnel combine to intensify bonds, resolve conflict, and restore equilibrium. Religious ritual provides another example of male initiation and female response to males. Women, acting in socially defined roles, sustain the group by the preparation of a ceremonial meal expressing the interrelatedness of both sexes.

In the community's social space the organization of social form is seen, yet most personnel exit from the community space at regular intervals in pursuit of economic resources and formal education. Economics require work in low pay and low status positions and contributes little to social identity in the community. It is the allocation of resources in the community that determines social standing rather than occupations per se.

The educational system is similar to economics in that it is spatially distant from the community and its curriculum is not immediately relevant to local standing. Enthusiastic support for sports, where males are champions, stands in contrast to the unenthusiastic response to academics, another organization representing the wider society. Youth easily master those lessons provided by home and community where they are groomed for the customary sex roles and social realities of community participation.

There is then, the organization of time and space, the division of labor between two sexes and three generations in the community. These dimensions of the ethnographic present are explicated in Part I. The emphasis on the present draws attention away from the temporal dimension of kinship, family and social maturation. Part II is devoted to the explication of the kinship system, the organization of household and the socialization of children within the family. The analysis of family and kinship emphasizes generational time and its articulation to space in residence patterns. The ethnographic present and the kinship system prepare for an analysis of adolescent maturation and the achievement of womanhood in Part III.



PART II

KINSHIP, FAMILY AND CHILDHOOD

The use of space, institutions, and ritual, discussed in Part I, illustrates the ethnographic present in Edge Crossing. Kinship, family organization and childhood development presented in this part, clarify the integration of family and community. The first chapter in this section addresses kinship as an ambilateral system, emphasizing recognition of ancestors and the rights and obligations of kin. Kinship and family organization over generational time are described in Chapter 7 through events and relationships in one descent group. The case illustrates the flexibility of the system, including the sharing of maternal role and child care among related women. In Chapter 8, childhood development, customary rights and responsibilities of kin toward children and the interpersonal relationships of children with one another and adults are analyzed. The discussion of the kinship system in Part II and the previous presentation of community prepares for the detailed analysis of female adolescent maturation in Part III.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE KINSHIP SYSTEM

The kinship structure in Edge Crossing is related to ritually expressed ancestral relationships with founding fathers, claim to land, residence and domestic functions. Temporal and spatial dimensions of kinship including patterns of emigration, population and residence influence descent group formation and membership. A descent group is defined as a living group of persons, tracing descent from a deceased apical ancestor, who recognize the leadership of the eldest person having claim to ancestral land in direct descendance from the apical ancestor. This definition includes only living persons in the group but linkages to deceased ancestors is necessary to establish claim to land and the interrelatedness between operating descent groups. Functioning to insure their continuation, descent groups provide for the needs of members, have flexibility in affiliation and rights and responsibilities. In this chapter the formation of and affiliation to descent groups is examined. The alterations in descent groups occurring over generational time are discussed. The function of descent groups in providing for dependent members is then reviewed.

The history of Edge Crossing dates back 100 years when four couples settled there and reared several children.<sup>1</sup> All of their children stayed in the area, remained on family land, married exogamously and had large families (see Figure 2, Generations B and C). The grandchildren of the founding fathers are present day older residents and they all trace ancestry alternating between males and females in ascending lines to arrive at apical ancestors.<sup>2</sup> Affiliation to a descent group by tracing linkages, selectively, through either males or females in any one generation with a difference in emphasis is characteristic of ambilateral systems (Firth 1957:5).

Descent groups formed around the founding fathers, their progeny and grandchildren (see Figure 2, Generations A, B and C). When founding fathers died, descent groups segmented and formed around their male and female children all of whom remained in Edge Crossing. Members of Generation C (see Figure 2) emigrated<sup>3</sup> and left only one or two siblings on family land. Those who remained (see Figure 3) now head descent groups but maintain bonds with siblings who moved away.

The bonds between siblings are illustrated by the distribution of family land. Family land is divided among siblings at the death of

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<sup>1</sup>Informants relate anecdotes about ancestors who were slaves but their living arrangements, progeny and locations of residence are unclear. This may be a product of the advanced age of informants or the unsettled conditions of the mid-nineteenth century.

<sup>2</sup>Through the generations intermarriages between the four families have occurred. It is possible to develop a kinship diagram representing every person in Edge Crossing in some kinship relationship to all others.

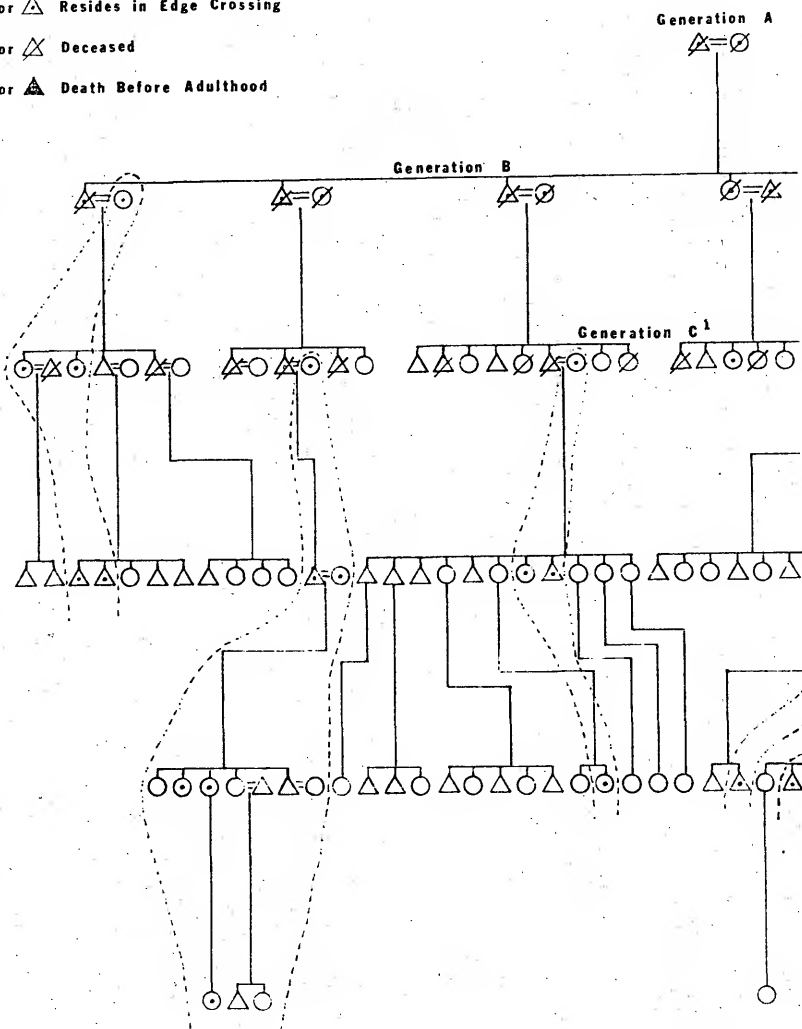
<sup>3</sup>Persons who emigrated produced fewer children, probably reflecting upward mobility or the greater availability of birth control in urban centers.

### Legend

○ or △ Resides in Edge Crossing

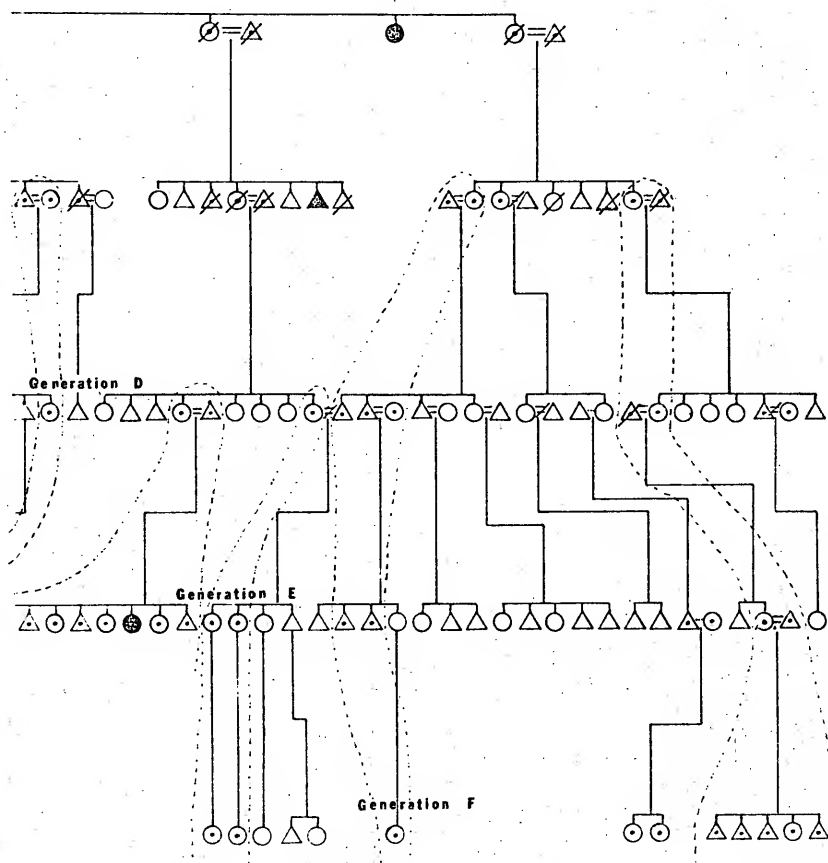
⊘ or ⋈ Deceased

⊙ or ⬤ Death Before Adulthood



<sup>1</sup> Only persons relevant to descent groups shown.

Figure 2. Genealogical relationships among descent groups descended from one



apical ancestor.

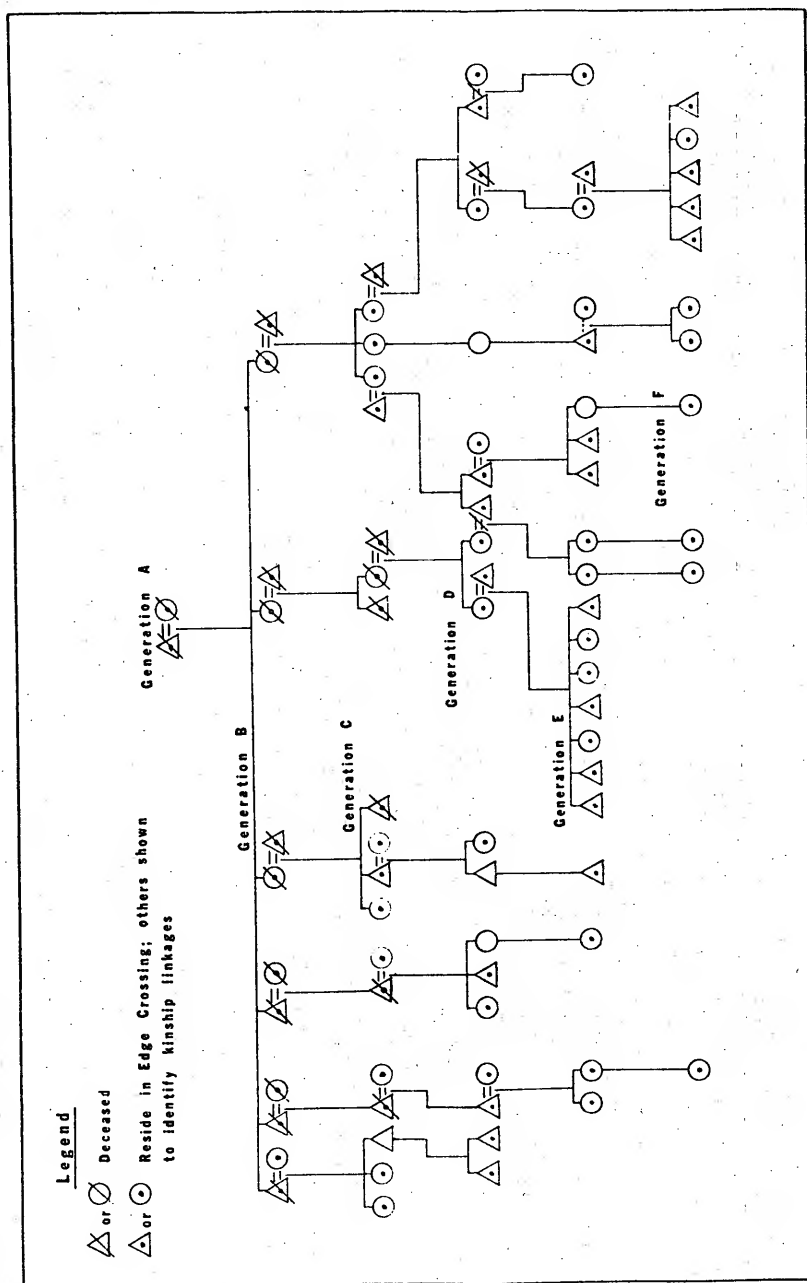


Figure 3. Subset of Figure 2 in Edge Crossing.

parents but siblings who emigrate often forfeit their rights to land and permit their portion to be divided among their siblings remaining in Edge Crossing. Emigrated siblings who maintain kinship ties and assist in the payment of property taxes are allotted a portion of their siblings' land if they return to Edge Crossing to live.

For example, a couple in Generation B owned 25 acres of land and had three daughters and four sons. The four males left the area in young adulthood and only one of them is living. One daughter cared for her parents until their death, remained in the family home and paid the taxes with the aid of her siblings. A second daughter moved onto her husband's family land at marriage, lived there 45 years and moved back to her inherited land (approximately seven acres) after his death ten years ago. Her children had a home built for her on the land. The third daughter lives on her husband's family land but retains an interest in the land through her sisters. The remaining brother, living in a Florida city, is in poor health and has a crippled wife. The three sisters have pooled their resources to repair an abandoned house on family land so that the brother and his wife can return to Edge Crossing. The house was built on five acres of family land by one of the deceased brothers about 35 years ago.

Family land is held intact through many years by the payment of taxes by descent group members. The land is divided after the death of parents as siblings have need for it. Land holdings remain fairly large because most persons with claim to land do not exercise it when they live elsewhere. Land rights are established by descent group membership but tend to remain operational only through residence. Residence on family land before adulthood is necessary for descent group membership.



Most descent group members who remain in Edge Crossing build on family land before the death of parents, affirming their claim to it before it is divided. The clusterings of houses in Edge Crossing, discussed in Chapter 1, are a manifestation of the settlement pattern of descent group residence patterns. Most persons remaining in Edge Crossing live on ancestral land (see Figures 3 and 4). Those who have left the area may return, but children born to emigres usually cannot. They are not members of descent groups in the community and have not contributed to tax payments or other kin obligations there.

Rights to land in Edge Crossing are similar to those described for members of the kainga<sup>1</sup> in the Gilbert Islands.

The original ancestor had lived on a certain tract of land. Some of his descendants continued to reside there but others moved away. Those who continued to reside there plus [author's emphasis] those who had been born and raised there but had moved away after marriage, formed the kainga. Thus, those who were born on the land inherited membership even if they moved away; but if they moved away their children did not inherit membership. Thus, if a man's parents were living patrilocally he would belong to his father's kainga; if they were living matrilocally he would belong to his mother's. It was thus in a sense parental residence choice that determined the individual's kainga membership (Fox 1967:158).

Rights to land are dependent on descent group membership and the assumption of responsibilities in the descent group.

The formation of a descent group occurs at the death of the eldest person resident on family land in direct linkage to a founding father. The largest possible descent group is composed of a living person from Generation C (see Figure 2) who traces descent from a founding father

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<sup>1</sup>The kainga is a kin based land holding organization.

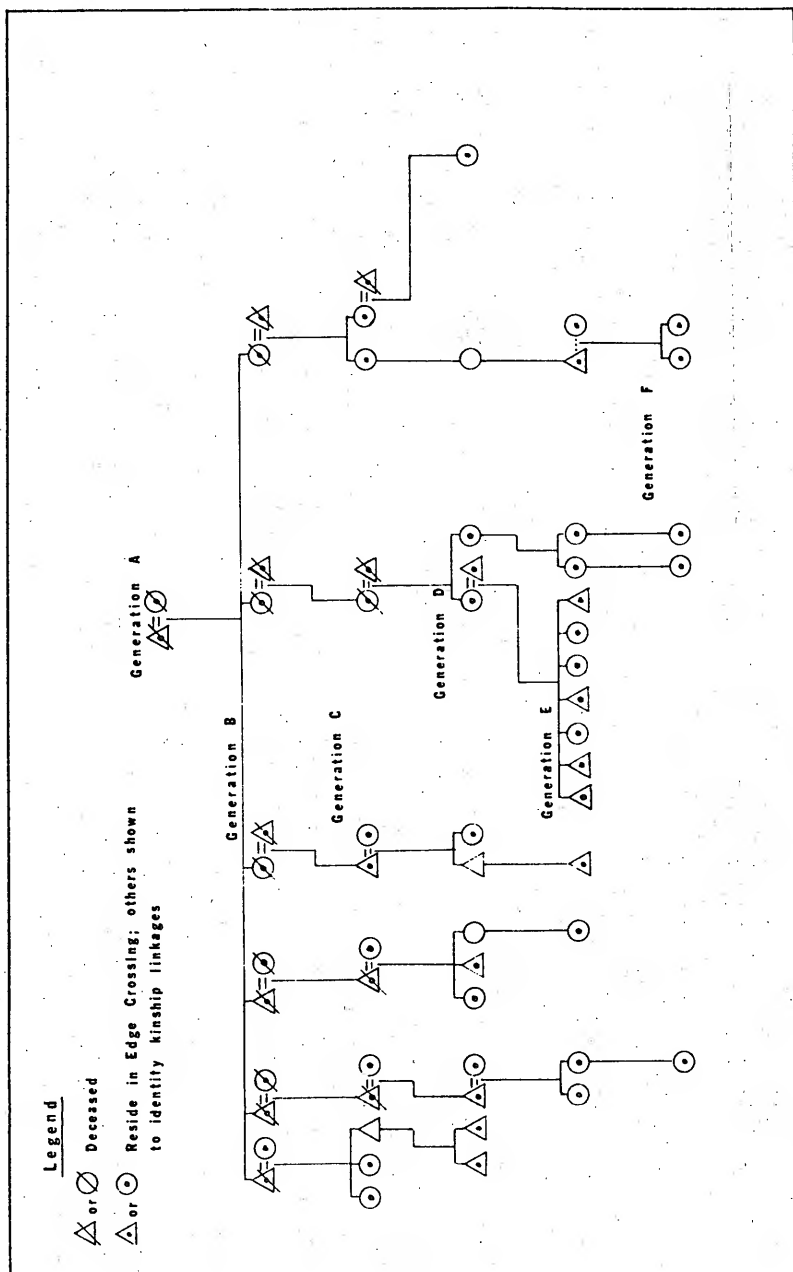


Figure 4. Subset of Figure 2 on ancestral land.

(through mother or father) and his (or her) children (Generation D), grandchildren (Generation E) and great grandchildren (Generation F). In actuality no group is as large as theoretically possible because emigration has resulted in members of Generations D and E affiliating with descent groups (on the mother's or father's side) beyond the community. Most persons who emigrate do not return to Edge Crossing, thus reducing substantially the constitution of operating descent groups.

Four characteristics of descent groups could be noted (see Figure 2). Affiliation to descent groups alternates between male and female linkages to arrive at linkages with a founding father. Descent groups usually have representatives from three or four generations. The number of persons in a descent group is only a fraction of those who would have been members if they or their parents had not emigrated. Children of emigres are drawn into descent groups when they are sent to Edge Crossing to live with relatives (on the mother's or father's side).

The formation and constitution of descent groups indicates that ambilateral descent was established by Generation C (see Figure 2). A preference for emphasis on the male linkage is seen in the continuity of the male surnames,<sup>1</sup> and in tracing linkage to the male ancestor. In Generations B and C a woman, who customarily gave birth to children

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<sup>1</sup>Until recently the legal system required that a child carry the surname of the mother's husband or, if unmarried, the mother's maiden name, but differing practices have always prevailed in Edge Crossing. Single women and married women who have children fathered by men other than their husbands give their babies their maiden name or the baby's fathers' surname. The lack of conformity to the legal system is related to the kinship system, the disregard of impositions by the wider society and the practices of lay midwives who formerly made out the birth certificates.

fathered by one man, married younger, permitting an easier identification of all her children with their father's descent group. In addition, farming, a male pursuit, was important economically. Now land is used primarily for residence and householding and childrearing interests are more important.

There is a tendency to choose affiliation with the maternal linkage in Generations D and E. It is a pattern for girls to give birth to one or more children before marriage. These children ordinarily maintain some contact with, but do not emphasize, affiliation with the father's descent group. When the mother is married and residence is proximal to the father's descent group children do emphasize affiliation with the father's descent group. In certain kinship systems, notably those of the Maori, Tonga and Samoa, the major emphasis is upon descent in the male line but allowance is made, so frequently that it is considered normal, for title to membership to be through females (Firth 1957:5). Descent group membership in contemporary Edge Crossing follows such a pattern.

Women, customarily having children fathered by more than one man, express a strong desire to live near their own kin and influence their children's descent group affiliation. Children who reside with maternal relatives, for example, usually maintain weaker ties with paternal links although they receive toys, clothes and money from paternal relatives. When they are older (between eight and 19 years of age) they can choose to live with relatives on the paternal side and affiliate with the paternal descent group. The system provides an element of choice for the individual although residence decisions are usually determined in accordance with the needs of the individual and group.

One of the major functions of the descent group is to provide for the needs of dependent members, both young and old. Residents state that children are "good to have" because they help take care of their parents in old age. Young women, perceiving the value of children say "Kids is the keys to a lots of things." The system permits each generation to lead descent groups in maturity and to enjoy the status and authority leadership offers.

Children, necessary for the continuation of the descent group, are not solely the responsibility of their biological mothers. If biological mothers do not assume proper responsibility for their care women in the descent group see to it that arrangements for their care are made. Aunts and grandmothers who have the time to supervise children are their sociological mothers. The arrangement frees biological mothers to work or care for other children and permits the sociological mothers to have someone living with them. The significant role of women in descent groups is related to the value placed on motherhood (discussed in Part III) and procreation.

The descent group also functions to care for infirm or old members. Mothers and fathers are cared for by their children. Usually a daughter or daughter-in-law lives with the parents in their house and other children provide financial assistance. When the parents die the child who has lived in the house and "looked after" them remains in the house. Often members of Generation C (see Figure 2) who have emigrated and have few children return to Edge Crossing when they are old and are cared for by their sisters. This pattern reflects the strength of ties between siblings who belonged to the same descent group in childhood.

The resources of the descent group are organized to meet the needs of dependent members and for mutual financial aid and assistance. Descent groups, composed of persons of various ages and both sexes allow the abilities and resources of all members to contribute to the group's welfare. The example of Maxine in Chapter 1 reflects the cooperation of descent group members from three households and four generations. Within the system each individual passes through dependent and independent phases in the life cycle and in the process receives more than he provides and provides more than he receives, balancing the support and assistance that flows between males and females of all ages.

The balance within descent groups is maintained by the options individuals have in affiliation. Children are placed with childless women by women with numerous children. Males and females marry, align with the descent group of their spouse and eventually contribute children to that group. Older children, sent to live with relatives, affiliate with a descent group other than that of birth. Affiliation permits balance in situations where reproduction and marriage do not assure a normal distribution of personnel to a group.

In sum, the kinship system in Edge Crossing is ambilateral, permitting kinship to be traced through males or females in any one generation, with a difference in emphasis, to linkages to a founding father. Ambilateral systems in which title to descent group membership through females is considered normal are termed optative descent group systems (Firth 1957:5). Descent traced through females, residence near or with maternal relatives, and emphasis on the maternal descent group is very common in Edge Crossing, apparently more so now than three generations ago. There is, however, a persistent pattern of tracing

descent to a founding male ancestor maintaining viable relationships with paternal relatives and carrying the paternal surname.

The function of the descent group, under the leadership of an older woman or of a man and wife, is to provide for its members. Dependent members are cared for by women in the group and are supported economically by males and some females. The responsibility for children is shared among females under the guidance of older, experienced women. Within the system children and young childbearing women receive the support of the group. Their experiences, described in Chapter 8 and in Part III, illustrate the function of the descent group and the social relations within the household and family. In the next chapter, the organization of the descent group and household through five generations is examined. The formation of the descent group, the division of land, the allocation of resources and the division of labor based on age and sex are discussed.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE DESCENT GROUP AND HOUSEHOLD

The discussion of kinship and descent in the previous chapter indicates that an optative ambilateral descent system organizes kin relations in Edge Crossing. In this chapter one descent group is examined to illustrate several significant aspects of kinship, group formation, household composition, marriage and responsibility within the descent group and household. The presentation focuses on the unfolding of events in a descent group and the meaning of these events to the spatial and temporal dimensions of development within households and generational time.

#### Formation of the Descent Group

The descent group of Mary Jackson, 75 years of age, the granddaughter of one of the founding fathers (see Figure 5, Generation A), is analyzed. She has spent nearly all of her life in Edge Crossing but first left when she lived with a cousin in County Seat while attending high school. While she was away her brothers (see Figure 5, C1, C3 and C4)<sup>1</sup> were

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<sup>1</sup>Letters and numbers in parentheses refer to Figure 5. The letter indicates the generation involved and the number refers to the individual on the diagram. Mary is C5 in Figure 5.



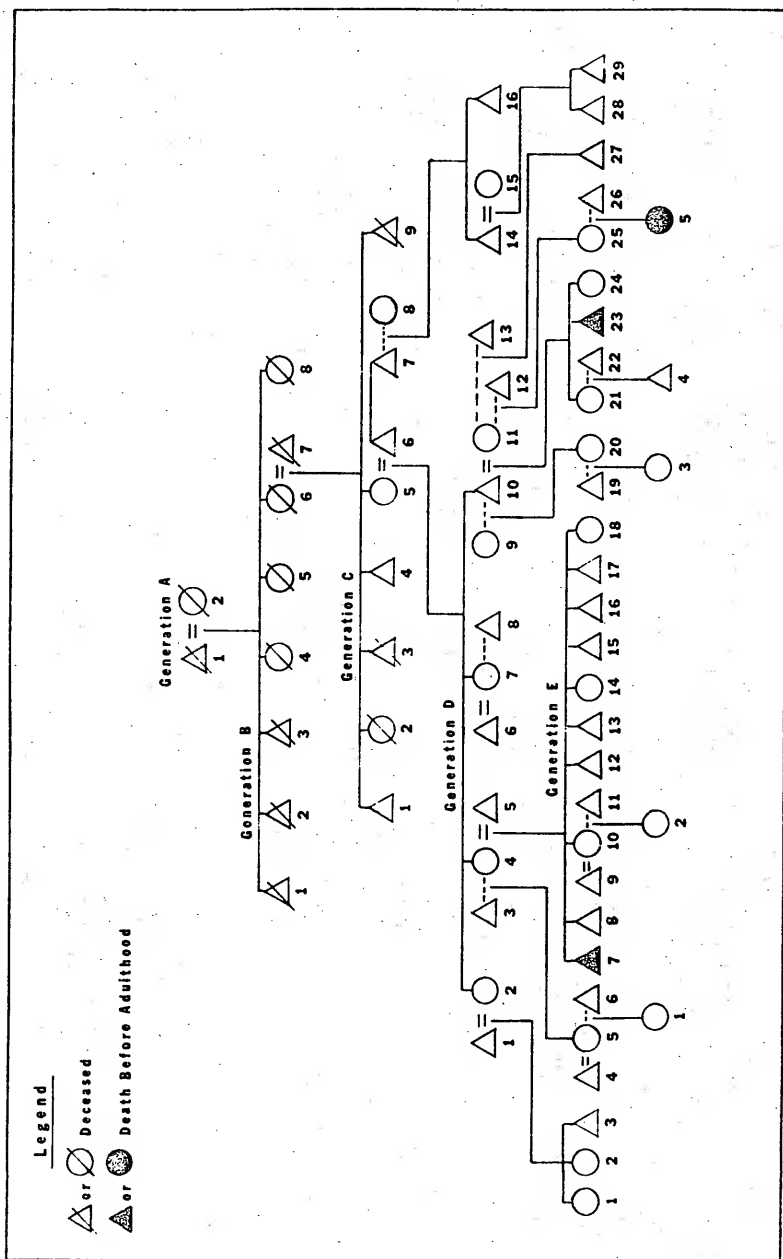


Figure 5. Genealogy of personnel in Mary Jackson's descent group.

periodically absent working and engaging in courtship activities. Mary's sister (C2), about five years older than Mary, bore two children before marrying and moving to County Seat. Her sister became attached to her husband's descent group and died in childbirth with her eleventh child. Neither she nor any of her children ever returned to Edge Crossing to live.

After high school graduation at 18 years of age, Mary returned to her parents' home and developed a relationship with a young man from a community about 20 miles east of Edge Crossing. It is common for maturing siblings to move in and out of the household frequently for several years as they begin to work, court and establish families of their own. During these years the composition of a household varies from week to week although most comings and goings are by persons having established positions there.

Mary's courtship experience was similar to that of most women of her age and illustrates one of the differences between marriage then and now. She and Isaac, her boyfriend (C6), met at church and he came to her house to "call" on her. After a few months Isaac asked her if she would "keep company" with him, she agreed and he approached her parents.

The meeting with her parents was formal, only Isaac and Mary's mother and father were present. He requested Mary's "special company" and her parents consented. It was understood that her parents approved of Isaac as a potential son-in-law and gave him their assurance that Mary would court no one else. He agreed to see her at home and accompany her whenever they went out. It was believed that the "nature" of young people was to go out, enjoy themselves and have sexual relations.

Therefore, part of the agreement was that Isaac accept paternity and financial responsibility for any children born to Mary while he had her "company." Couples usually married when pregnancy occurred or after a courtship of a year or more. The parental role in courtship established sexual access and jurisdiction over progeny before marriage or residence changes.

After she and Isaac kept company for a year they were married in her mother's home, the same day moving to Isaac's mother's home to live for about one year. The following year they went to Palm Beach, Florida, to work with Isaac's brother (C7) who was involved in a harvesting operation. Although Mary was sickly for about a year after marriage she eventually became pregnant and returned from Palm Beach to live with her mother. Two years after her marriage she bore her first child (D2) in her mother's home. Isaac was living with his mother during the work week and spending weekends with his wife and her family in Edge Crossing.

Mary's four children, all delivered at Mary's mother's home, were born at two year intervals (D2, D4, D7 and D10). While her youngest child (D10) was two years of age, Mary had a serious illness and abdominal surgery terminating her childbearing. Mary, Isaac and her children lived with Mary's mother, with or near Isaac's mother, and near Isaac's brother during these years, searching for a residence near relatives where Isaac could work. They finally settled in Edge Crossing when Isaac obtained permanent employment in the mine. Because resources to build a home were not available they lived with his or her relatives who helped with child care when Mary worked. Most individuals and

couples move around when they are young adults and eventually settle near one of their parents after childbearing is well underway.

By the time Mary terminated her childbearing all of her brothers were married. One of them (C4) moved to a central Florida city and married. Another (C9) lived with his wife's family in a nearby community until he died as a result of a work site accident as a young man. The two other brothers (C1 and C3) obtained family land and built homes there. In Generation C, three of six siblings stayed in Edge Crossing, a higher percentage than in most families.

Isaac built a house on land Mary received from her mother in about 1934. Shortly after they moved Mary's father (B7) died but Mary's mother did not move into Mary's house for two years because Mary and her sisters-in-law "looked after" her until she had a stroke and could not walk.

Mary's mother had been the head of one descent group formed by Mary's and her brother's families. After the land was divided among them and her mother became dependent, the group segmented into three groups. They lived within 400 yards of one another and visited regularly. The sister and brother who left the area maintained ties there through Mary's mother and their siblings. Mary's brother (C4) who lived in central Florida had only one daughter. After his wife died he became sick and returned to Edge Crossing. Mary takes care of him in her home but his daughter supports him financially. Descent groups form around siblings who remain in Edge Crossing and claim family land.

The formation of descent groups among Mary's siblings illustrates that males and females share in family land. Siblings who leave the area tend to lose claim to land but they often enjoy the benefits of

membership as illustrated by the return of Mary's brother (C4) to Mary's household. In Generation C marriage was contracted through the parents and tended to be a permanent arrangement. Adaptations to marriage seems to have taken place, they are illustrated in the next section discussing the maturation of Mary's children.

### Separation of Siblings in Maturity

As children mature and develop relationships beyond the home in school, courtship and work, the household gains and loses members. Before her children started leaving home Mary states that she experienced the happiest years of her life, although her husband worked 12 to 14 hours, six days a week at the mine. She and her maturing children took care of the home, Mary's mother and enjoyed long summer evening singing and "jiving" on the front porch. The household composition was changed when she acquired two foster sons and her children started leaving home.

In 1937, Isaac's brother (C7) from Palm Beach requested that Mary take care of his sons. He and his wife had three children but he had a liaison with another woman who had two boys fathered by him, five and eight years of age (D14 and D16). The relationship had grown sour; she was drinking heavily and was taken to court for the custody of the boys. The father sought another woman to take care of his children.<sup>1</sup> Mary was reluctant to take the children but her brother-in-law "beg and

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<sup>1</sup> Mary stated that her brother-in-law's wife would not take the boys because she and her children were "mulatto" (light-skinned) and she did not want them in her house.

plead so pitiful" that she consented. The next weekend the father (C7) brought the boys to Mary's house to live until adulthood. The placement of the boys in Mary's household illustrates the variety of channels through which kinship obligations flow. Mary was related to C7 through her husband and obligated to him because she and Isaac had worked for him shortly after marriage (see page 96). Thus, the household was composed of persons related through the female line to a founding father but included two boys related to a male spouse (see Figure 6).

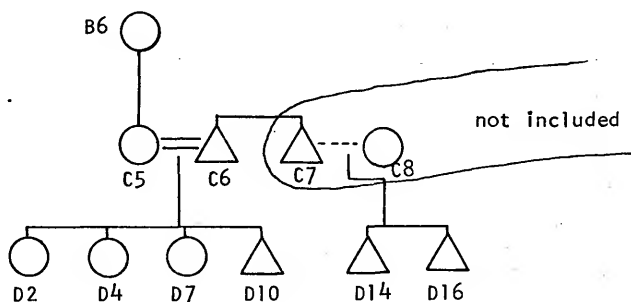


Figure 6. Mary's household before separation of children.

The entrance of the boys into Mary's household occurred when her children were maturing and leaving home. Mary's daughter (D2) went to live in central Florida with Mary's brother (C4) to attend high school with his daughter.<sup>1</sup> When D2 finished college she returned briefly to Mary's home, married in 1940, and then settled in a western city. Although

<sup>1</sup>Both of them graduated from high school and the black university in Florida.

she returned to her mother's home for three months when she gave birth to her first child, she has never lived there since.

Mary's youngest daughter (D7) quit high school and stayed in County Seat. She married a well-established man about 20 years her senior who was a crew boss for harvesting operations in areas surrounding County Seat.

The only son (D10) was active in courtship and was linked to three girls by procreation but did not marry. He left the community in 1951 when he was drafted. Indications are that D10 was a much sought man because two girls designated him as the father of their babies. One gave her baby the Jackson name, but he denied paternity of either. Although the third girl designated another man as the father, Mary, the girl's mother and D10 acknowledge him to be the father.<sup>1</sup>

In 1954 the son (D10) returned from the service and lived in University Town. He established a relationship with D11 who had two children (E25 and E27) from former relationships. One child (E21) was born to them shortly after their marriage.

Mary's second eldest daughter (D4) remained at home until she was over 25 years of age, periodically working away from home. When she gave birth to her first child she was assisted by Mary and "gave" the child to Mary because she didn't want to marry the baby's father. After the birth of her second child<sup>2</sup> she married and moved to County Seat.

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<sup>1</sup>Grandmothers and other interested persons determine paternity by the appearance of the child and the admitted or observed activities of the mother.

<sup>2</sup>The second child was born on the same day that Mary's mother (B6) died. He died of influenza before one year of age.

After D4 left the household only five members remained and two of them (D14 and D16) were often absent (see Figure 7).

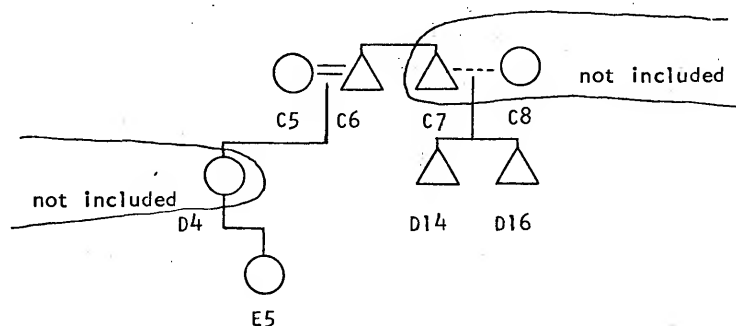


Figure 7. Household composition after separation of siblings.

The separation of Mary's children at maturity reveals patterns associated with household formation. Girls often leave children born before marriage with females in the descent group when they marry and change residence. Women often receive assistance from their mothers at birth and return home if they are away. Children from a household usually leave to work, court and live with other relatives while they are establishing independence of parents. Usually one or more children remain in the home, as D4 did for several years, and if they all leave one or more of them return after a few years. In the next section the return of Mary's children to family land, household composition and function are discussed.

#### Household Organization and Descent Group Membership

Flexibility, characteristic of kin related behaviors in Edge Crossing, is illustrated in household function and the distribution of



responsibility among related households. In this section the activities of Mary Jackson's descent group in 1972<sup>1</sup> are used to reveal the fluidity of household membership, the distribution of responsibility and the membership of descent groups. The changes occurring in Mary's descent group pertinent to the discussion are briefly reviewed.

In 1955, Mary's son (D10) and her second (D4) and third daughter (D7) moved back to Edge Crossing. Each had a house built within 75 feet of Mary's home on family land. The compositions of the households about seven years ago reveal the personnel involved in activities in 1972. Mary's household was composed of four members (see Figure 8). One stepson had left because Mary did not like his drinking in her house. The other (D14) lived with his wife's family after the birth of their son (E28). Mary's granddaughter (E5) remained at home and had given birth to a daughter (F1).

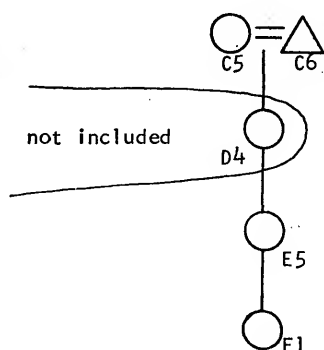


Figure 8. Mary's household in 1965.

<sup>1</sup> I was present in Mary's household frequently and observed many of the events reported here.

The household of Mary's son (D10) included four regular persons and one who was periodically absent (E27). The daughter of D11 before her marriage (E25) lived with her paternal grandmother in Edge Crossing. Her son (E27) lived in the household at times but stayed with his paternal grandmother during some periods (see Figure 9).

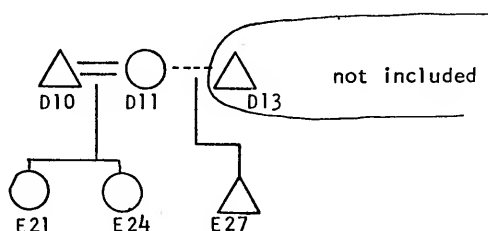


Figure 9. The household of Mary's son (D10) in 1965.

Mary's second eldest daughter had 11 children, ten of whom survived. She and her family lived in a separate dwelling (see Figure 10). The household was composed of ten persons (one of her sons [E13] was given to D7 and one daughter [E5] was given to Mary).

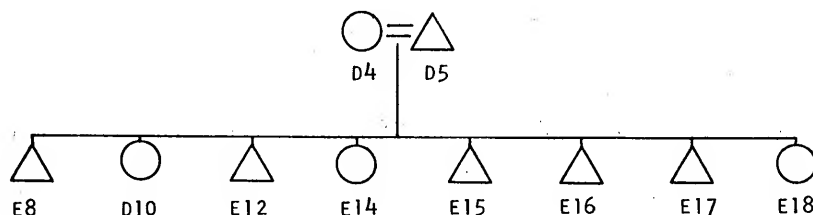


Figure 10. The household of Mary's daughter (D4) in 1965.

Within a year after the birth of D4's last child she became ill and was in a state hospital for 18 months. Her husband (D5) moved to Orlando, Florida, and has never returned to the household. While D4 was gone all of her children moved in with Mary and D4 has not lived in her house since.

The youngest daughter (D7) lived with her husband and the boy (E13) given to her by D4. She separated from her husband and moved to New York. She placed the boy (E13) with Mary and has financially supported him ever since. After D7 went to New York, D14 and his wife moved into her house. They had one child then and another in 1969. In 1972 their household was composed of four persons, although D14 was often absent (see Figure 11).

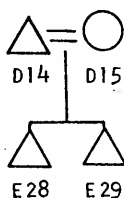


Figure 11. The household of Mary's stepson (D14) in 1972.

In 1972 there were three households (since D4 did not live in her house) composed of 24 persons coinciding roughly with the descent group in Edge Crossing headed by Mary and Isaac. In the discussion below, the movement of personnel between the households and household function reveal an accurate picture of descent group membership and household organization.

The flexible organization of the households and the groupings of personnel reduce the social boundaries between them. Household members

group together according to age. The eight children in the play group spend their time outside. Four adolescent girls from two households spend their time in one of the three houses. The six male adolescents move in and out of the houses but are usually away from the houses except at night. The adults work away from home and often communicate to their children through Mary and Isaac who are usually present.

Child care responsibility is shared among the women and adolescent girls in the households. There are only two children (F2 and E29) who have to be "looked after." When the adolescent mother of F2 was in school Mary, Isaac and D4 were primarily responsible for her. When D7 visited over the summer she took F2 back with her and she has not returned.<sup>1</sup> Mary and Isaac are responsible for a four year old boy (E29) because he plays in Mary's yard and house throughout the day. Because his mother works, he usually eats at Mary's but goes to sleep in his mother's home under the care of his ten year old brother. All the other children are either in a play group or are adolescents. They are responsible for their own behavior but they are subject to the authority of all the adults in the households. The female adolescents in Mary's house are responsible for housekeeping and some food preparation. One adolescent daughter (E21) performs the same role in Mary's son's home but sometimes helps her cousins with their work at Mary's. The adolescents in Mary's household, both male and female, usually sleep and spend their time in D4's house but return to Mary's to eat, go to the bathroom and watch television. The play group and

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<sup>1</sup>The transfer of F2 into the care of D7 is an example of a young mother relinquishing her child to another mothering figure. This process is discussed in Part III.

adolescent associations cut across household lines adding to the fluidity of personnel in the households.

Although the young household members are loosely organized in the homes there are core persons closely identified with each household. The core persons in Mary's household are Mary, Isaac and their daughter (D4). In Mary's son's household, he and his wife (D11) are consistently resident. The wife of Mary's step son (D15) is the stable adult in that household because her husband is often absent. All of the resident adults are in frequent contact with Mary and Isaac because they visit several times a day. One of the reasons for the constant interaction among the adults is that the only functioning bathroom, well and telephone are located at Mary's house. All members of the three households share them. The three households would function as one unit except for two important factors. First, married couples have exclusive sexual access to their marital partners within the households and usually sleep in their own houses.<sup>1</sup> Second, the women in each of the three households usually cook one or two meals daily in their own houses. All other household functions and personnel are loosely identified with the houses and alternate between them.

Household composition varies as young persons leave to work elsewhere and to visit. For example, E10 and E13 stayed in New York with D7 over the summer and E14 stayed with her father in Orlando. Households also expand when young persons tangential to the households take up residence. For example, E25, the daughter of D11, sometimes stays at Mary's and so does the husband of E5. Household function is not disrupted by the addition or subtraction of one or more persons.

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<sup>1</sup>Married persons have other sexual contacts beyond the households.

The three households function as a descent group in day to day affairs, but over time there are irregularities. When D7 went to New York she would have lost her position in the group but she maintains membership by supporting E13 and taking care of F2. She still owns her house and returns annually to Edge Crossing. By every indication D7 is a member of the descent group although she isn't resident in Edge Crossing. On the other hand D14 and D15 are resident and enjoy the advantages of descent group membership. They receive child care, live on family land and are treated as group members. But, D14's claim to family land and descent group membership is very tenuous because he is not properly related to the descent group (see previous section) and his behavior has not endeared him to Mary. It is his wife who maintains the relationship with Mary and Isaac. She (D15) arranged for a home to be built on her family land and she and the boys moved there in December, 1972. Her renewed attachment to her family has defined her and her children as distinct from Mary's descent group but her sons (E28 and E29) still stay with Mary when she works.

A similar event is occurring with Mary's son (D10) and his wife with different results. They have received family land from Mary and built a house across a lake from Mary's house. When they moved there they retained descent group membership because D10 is the only son and has assisted Mary and Isaac with house maintenance and in other ways through the years. Descent group membership and residence do not necessarily coincide. Persons living on family land do not always secure possession of it. Descent group membership is determined by linkages to founding fathers, residence and maintenance of kin ties.<sup>1</sup> Household composition

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<sup>1</sup>The system is pliable. If Mary and Isaac had not had a son Mary's foster son (D14) would have had descent group membership despite the lines of descent.

reflects the age and affiliation of personnel but there are core members who endure. The core members are adult women and couples. Children move between related houses and in youth leave to work or marry. Households tend to cluster so that vital functions, including child care, housekeeping and cooking can be shared by women of various ages. Mary, an experienced woman, supervises the care of children in three households but delegates the responsibility to young females. The mature women work and their children go to Mary's to eat, sleep and use the bathroom. The adolescent girls assist in housekeeping and cooking and often unite to get their chores completed so that they can do other things. Household composition varies through time and functions to meet the needs of the members through sharing.

In this section the organization of households is analyzed. The flexibility in household composition and function permits children to have a variety of relationships and experiences. In the next chapter the experiences of children are examined more closely. Childhood socialization from birth to the onset of adolescence is described. The material is organized around the natural divisions accepted by mothers and the changing social relationship of the child through time.

## CHAPTER 8

### CHILDHOOD SOCIALIZATION

In previous chapters household patterns, descent groups and families are discussed. The fluidity of personnel in the household, allocation of resources and the responsibility for child care suggest that the care of children is given high priority in the kinship system. Childhood socialization, development, care and education of children are the subjects of this chapter. The infant and child from birth until about ten years of age undergoes continual physical and social change. Adults and other children interact with children relative to their abilities and needs, encouraging certain activities and behaviors and discouraging others. Socialization is the interplay of the child and his environment resulting in his learning behaviors acceptable to the group. It is necessarily related to the changing physical development of the child through the early years of life. For this reason the discussion begins with the infant shortly after birth and progresses through childhood. Socialization, a continuing process, has several important parameters in the years after childhood; they are carefully analyzed in Part III.



### Infancy

Infants are born into descent groups and households but their nurturance is a female function. Birth usually places infants in close contact with their mothers shortly after delivery. The exclusive mother-child relationship usually lasts from three days to a week when they are rarely out of contact with one another. The mother, immediately available to meet the baby's needs, sleeps with him to assure that he is warm and that she is awakened when he needs attention. During the first week of life the baby sleeps most of the time, when awake, the mother interacts intensely with him. He is cleaned, fondled, held on the lap, rocked, talked to and fed. When the baby sleeps the mother sleeps, rests, visits and awaits the next waking episode. The baby is fed on demand and is offered milk whenever he awakens. When the infant urinates or has a bowel movement he is changed immediately. The baby is usually dressed in a diaper and shirt and covered with a light blanket in warm seasons. A kimono and socks or overall outfits and heavier blankets are added in cooler weather.

The infant's father and other kin and friends visit the mother in the hospital and at home.<sup>1</sup> They look at the baby, remark on his expressions and inquire about the name and sex. The facial features and hair of the baby are described and some venture a guess at who the baby looks like. The skin tone, hair line, ears, eyebrows, eyes, nose, mouth, cheeks and hands are used as points of discussion. A baby who is "big" and "fat" is thought to be very healthy. Babies over six pounds are described as "big" and "fat."

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<sup>1</sup> The father of the baby may not visit in some cases. These will be discussed in Part III.

If the baby sucks, purses his lips or gets his fingers into his mouth and eats moderately well when fed, he is called "greedy," a positive characteristic for a baby. When persons visit the mother and infant for the first time they usually bring something for the baby or promise to do so soon. New outfits, money or articles for baby care are presented to the mother. When a woman has her first baby the gift giving and visiting is more intense than after subsequent deliveries.

The new mother accepts the praise and gifts for the baby shyly. She smiles, focuses her eyes on the baby and says very little. The visitors maintain the conversation; they talk alternately to the mother about the baby and then to the baby. When someone asks how she feels the mother invariably says "all right." The physical possession of the baby and the pride she feels in having given birth to him outweigh any discomfort she experiences. The behaviors of friends and kin express the importance of giving birth. The infant, so pretty and interesting, is admired by all. The interactions and gifts reaffirm long standing kinship and friendship ties.

A week or so after the birth many persons visit and look at the baby but touch contact with the baby is restricted. The father of the baby may hold, fondle and talk to him but he rarely feeds, cleans or clothes him. Often the mother's mother or other related females feed, clean and dress the baby. Care of the infant is a valued task and only the mother and experienced females are knowledgeable about baby needs. Usually the mother has had extensive child care experience but may not have handled a newborn. It is the role of experienced females to offer assistance and guidance when needed. Visitors and inexperienced persons do not handle

the baby. The biological mother's sharing the care role with related women becomes pronounced later. Women often feel a closer bond to those children to whom they have given birth but actively engage in child care throughout adulthood.<sup>1</sup>

Three changes in behavioral patterns occur during the second or third week of life reflecting the social and physical development of the child. First, there is greater acceptance of friends and relatives holding and feeding the baby. Second, the baby journeys beyond his mother's home for brief periods with reliable persons or the mother. Third, the baby is in the care of other persons in the home when the mother is away. Gradually the infant is in more frequent physical contact with others in the home and away.

### The Baby

From about three weeks to fifteen months of age, several physical and social developments occur expanding the infant's experience. He learns to smile, laugh, verbalize some sounds, sit, stand, crawl and is called "the baby." The baby's activities and responses permit reciprocal interactions with the mother, father and family members.

The relationship the father establishes with his baby depends on various factors to be discussed in Part III. In most cases the father assumes economic responsibility for the baby through support of the mother,

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<sup>1</sup> In this discussion the term "mother" refers to the biological or sociological maternal person. The frequency with which females other than biological mothers assume maternal functions is very high and it is necessary to understand that "mother" may refer to one of several experienced women filling the maternal role.

sees his baby regularly and takes great pride in his development. The interactions of father and baby are often brief but intense. The father holds the baby, kisses him and talks to him in a low, soothing voice. The baby is held securely with both hands around the chest and sat on the lap when only a couple of months old. As the baby gains coordination he is held in a standing position on the lap and allowed to "jump" or alternately stand and sit, flexing the leg muscles. Other behaviors include holding the baby overhead by extended arms and lowering him to the lap repeatedly. Keys, candy or other trinkets are taken from the father's pocket to entertain and tease the baby.

During these interactions a constant stream of conversation interspersed with smiles and laughter occur. The baby is examined, described and his behaviors are discussed. When the baby is hungry, tired or needs to be changed he is returned to the mother. The father of the baby usually demonstrates pride in him, relates to him in an affectionate way and provides emotional and financial support for him.

The interactions of the baby are not restricted to the nuclear family. Siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and other persons associated with the household also relate to the baby. Babies are indulged in every way but spend probably nine-tenths of their time with their mothers and other maternal persons in the home.

The baby sleeps with his mother by night and naps in the midst of household activities by day. He is fed whenever hungry and is sometimes offered food hourly. Most women feed their babies from a bottle and use one of the commercially available prepared formulas. Although fresh milk is usually not kept in the homes there is always milk available for the baby. The nutritional balance provided by these formulas or by

breast milk help account for the healthy and vigorous condition of babies in the community. Babies are encouraged to drink from a cup at about one year of age although some continue to take a bottle occasionally for another year.

Babies are usually started on solid foods whenever they are not satisfied with a milk diet. Usually they are initially offered commercially available canned baby fruits. Most women do not use canned baby foods more than a month or so saying that they are not properly seasoned and that babies like table food better. By the time babies are four to six months of age they sit on their mothers' lap and are fed from the plate. Peas, potatoes, cereal, rice and other foods are mashed or premasticated to a palatable consistency. Babies are encouraged to express their desire for food and to feed themselves before one year of age.

Adult-baby interactions tend to support and develop sensual and tactile senses promoting sexual identification. Praise and reinforcement of typically male or female behavior is common during the first fifteen months of life and is increasingly evident with the passing of time. Throwing objects, striking others and demanding, aggressive behavior of boys is praised. Girls are encouraged to climb onto the laps of males, beg them for money or candy, kiss them and respond to their caresses. The behaviors of girl babies are described as 'womanish' and those of boys as 'manish.' The distinctions between expected behaviors of males and females begins almost at birth and gains momentum as the baby learns to perfect behaviors that are encouraged and rewarded verbally and tactilely.

Consistent with the general pattern of indulging babies, they are usually kept clean and neatly dressed. A daily bath, oiling the body and

hair are routine. The hair is brushed and flattened against the head. Girls have tiny plaits over the crown of the head to which ribbons are often attached. The hair of males is usually not cut for 12 to 18 months because some, but not all, mothers believe it physically weakens them. The mother's hands are pressed against the head in a firm, caressing action to "shape" the head. The index finger and thumb are pressed from the bridge to the tip of the nose encouraging straight growth. Legs, too, may be pressed daily to encourage proper development.

When there is a baby in the house, he is usually the primary focus of attention. He is played with, handled, talked to and about almost constantly. A familiar person entering the house usually interacts with the baby before greeting or interacting with others present. The central position of babies results in their being contented, smiling, laughing, and responsive. They generally are not shy of strangers and are encouraged to go to the arms of a wide number of adults. Siblings and other children find intense pleasure in eliciting responses from babies. When permitted to, they present him with toys, hold, tickle, kiss, feed and carry him.

The baby is allowed great liberty. Once a three year old sister sobbed to her mother that the baby had taken a trinket with which she was playing. The mother responded that "the baby" was supposed "to get into things." The sister had no recourse but to find other entertainment. Babies have license and need gratification during the first year of life such as they experience at no other time. Usually babies have mastered a number of motor and communication skills by 15 months of age. They walk, handle food, request food, utter a few words understood by mothers and interact effectively with various persons.

### Early Childhood

The development of motor skills, especially walking and the ability to initiate and maintain interactions with others, give the child greater independence and autonomy. Eating unassisted, bowel and bladder control, dressing, physical speech and other behaviors are mastered before three years of age, diminishing dependency on adults.

Of the tasks mastered by the young child, walking is the most important because it allows freedom to explore the environment and to interact with others at will. Children often learn to walk before one year, usually walk well by 15 month of age and are permitted outdoors to play in the sand and with objects, animals and other children. The child's developing ambulatory and social skills provide opportunities for comment and praise from adults. A little child wearing an adult's shoes staggering across the floor brings comments, laughter and physical support from others in the room.

Young children eat informally. The children usually sit beside adults at mealtime eating from adults' plates or from a plate of their own, supervised by adults. There is little pressure on children to eat food items which do not appeal to them, but children are usually hungry and consume food whenever it is offered. Children often continue to take a bottle until they are about two years of age but can handle a cup and drink from it before this age. When children spill food or drink there is little comment. Children often carry food with them as they explore and interact with others. Crackers, bread, a bottle of juice or water, or candy are often held by little children as they toddle about the house.

There is considerable snacking throughout the day. The favorite snack item for children is candy. Candy is purchased from the nearby stores by older children or parents and shared with the younger ones. Soda is also a favorite with children and they can identify it and beg adults to share or open one for them. When permitted, little children can drink a 12-ounce bottle of pop but they usually drink water or juice. Children's consumption of milk is greatly reduced after about 18 months of age and sometimes earlier.

The informal non-punitive approach taken with feeding carries over into bowel and bladder training. Initial attempts to encourage bowel and bladder control are taken between one and two years of age. Most mothers obtain a potty which can be relocated in the house to suit the needs of both mother and child. The training process usually extends over several months. Gradually children learn to produce on the potty and are praised for their efforts.

When children become familiar with the expectations of others regarding the potty and can perform accordingly, they are permitted to wear pants at home. When they are traveling or visiting they are usually returned to diapers. Most children achieve bowel and bladder control during the day by the time they are two years of age but it is not achieved at night until a year or so later. When daytime control is not achieved until nearly three years of age, it is considered a reflection on the mother who has not taken the time to train her child.

During the period of training children take an interest in their genitals and excrement. They are permitted to visually examine their urine and feces, are discouraged from touching them but are not reprimanded



for handling or visually examining their genitalia. When a child sitting on the potty is observed to be fondling his genitals, the mother may say, smiling, "What you doing?" The child responds with a smile and continues the activity.

A playful and entertaining attitude toward sexual stimulation of children is taken. For example, a two year old girl (Linda) was tormenting her eight month old cousin. The baby's mother, Joyce, reprimanded her verbally but Linda continued to punch and pull at the baby. Joyce got up, grabbed Linda (who was fully clothed), tickled her under the arms and fussed at her. The child laughed and let the baby alone. Joyce stopped tickling her, held her by the arm and pinched her labia majora several times. Linda stomped her feet and hollered. Finally Linda's mother looked over and said, "Joyce, stop that. Linda, tell her to leave your stuff alone." Joyce, laughing, released Linda. Linda, stomping her feet, said, "Stop it, Joyce, stop it." The sequence lasted about three minutes but illustrates one form that sensual stimulation takes. In many situations the child is permitted to explore and experiment with pleasurable body stimuli.

By the time children are trained they have considerable freedom in the house and yard. When not interacting with adults, they are playing, sometimes under the supervision of older children. The young children often become tired during the day and nap in the midst of household activity or are carried sleeping into a bedroom. At night they share their mother's bed. They usually retire and arise together. At times the physical desire for sleep requires that their sleep patterns differ. The casual manner in which childrens' activities are organized, and expressions of individuality, are also evident in clothing styles.

Usually the children go barefoot at home year round. Few clothes are worn during the warm months by any members of the household. Children usually wear pants and a shirt or at times girls wear dresses and underwear. Children usually select their own outfits and dress themselves. Their idiosyncratic choices of clothing are seldom questioned by adults as long as they are wearing an outfit that covers the buttocks and genitals. Children are encouraged to achieve independence in these areas and are not faulted for making decisions on their own.

Clothes worn at home are often in disrepair and a size or two too large. Neither parents or children seem concerned. Since children are going to get dirty and probably damage clothing, there is little effort to maintain elaborate wardrobes. But, every child has one or more complete outfits to be worn away from home which are kept immaculately clean and in excellent repair.

In all areas of childhood behavior a clear distinction between public and private behavior is made. Young children are permitted considerable latitude in behavior at home but when they are at church, shopping or visiting, they learn to behave and respond in a more structured way. Activities and responses are kept at a minimum and children stay very close to adults.

Situational behaviors are learned at about the time children learn to talk in short phrases. Most children learn to say "Mama," "Daddy" and the names of some family members before 15 months of age, and in time increase their vocabularies. Young children are praised for their verbal accomplishments and are stimulated by adults and siblings who mimic their verbalization and repeat words to them. The learning of language

skills is interrelated with interpersonal relationships in the domestic group.

In their interactions and behaviors little children are obliquely praised for adult behaviors. Body contact and response to touch are very much a part of the childhood experience. Between one and three years of age, children's emulations of adult behaviors are enjoyed without reservation by all. When a baby responds to the music often playing in the homes, by moving his head and body up and down in time with the music, a great response is elicited. "Dance man," or "Dance girl, come on, do the chicken," is heard from the mother or young persons in the house. An older person will laughingly say, "Look at that, going to hell dancing before she can walk."

Behaviors which elicit adult attention and affection receive encouragement from adults. Little children are taught to go to adults with face uplifted for a kiss. A little later they are taught to hug and kiss adults, relatives and friends. Teaching children to initiate affective interactions is repetitive. Children, particularly girls, are told to give "some sugar." In response, the adult hugs the child, kisses him, and often presses some pennies into his hand "for some candy." Soon the child learns to approach the adult and say, "Kiss?"

Between two and three years of age they become more practiced at imitating adult mannerisms. Little girls, particularly, learn to behave when dressed up. They twist, smooth their clothing and pat their hairdos. Boys disregard what is said to them and go off on their own more. Girls learn many of the mannerisms they see so often at home and these are remarked upon. When a little girl is told to do something she doesn't want to do, she tilts her face upward, casts her eyes downward, places

her hand on her hip and puckers her lips. The position is very similar to that which adults assume when they are pointedly disregarding a speaker and presenting an uncommunicative posture. Little girls, dressed in new clothes with bows, colored rubber bands and barettes in their hair, look pretty. Adults, seeing them, ask to hold them, get "some sugar" and remark on their good looks. Most women agree that little girls are more fun than boys because they can be dressed more prettily. While boys also take pride in new clothes and respond to praise, little girls steal the show.

When children become practiced at emulating adult behaviors the response of household members changes. The comments to the child provide encouragement of their behavior but in a different way. Often compliments on a girl's or boy's appearance or behavior is countered by the mother who states that the girl is "womanish," "fast" or "bad." To say that a child is "bad," is in fact, the most commonly heard description of young children.<sup>1</sup> Between two and three years of age boys are usually referred to as "little men," are called "mannish," and are described as "hardheaded." Although hardheadedness is not restricted to boys, they are expected to "rip and run" more and to be less helpful in the home.

Discipline in the form of light taps on the hands or legs begins when children learn to walk. There are relatively few serious offenses for which the child is slapped or switched, although many women keep a switch handy to threaten children. The interaction pattern of adult and child

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<sup>1</sup>"Bad" has many connotations; some of them are very positive. For example, "Look at that bad car," means that the car is something to see, it is the best. This connotation applies to children who are all "bad" and expected to be "bad."

relating to discipline situations follows a consistent pattern involving prolonged contact. The child initiates an action that is known to be forbidden. He looks toward the adult and the adult indicates with eye movements and a frown that the action is forbidden. The child draws back and then seconds later initiates the action again. The frown is repeated and a verbal rebuke added. The child pulls away, momentarily, and then begins again. The adult verbally chastizes the child again. The adult's attention alternates between the child and other conversations or activities in the room. Ultimately the challenging interaction becomes unbalanced. When the child completes the action the mother promises punishment "the next time" and secures a switch with which to threaten him. The exchange often ends with the adult lightly slapping or switching the child. If the adult is anxious, angry or disturbed about another situation not directly related to the child's activity the punishment reflects her feelings. Children usually detect from the tone of an adult's voice and verbal reprimands early in the sequence whether completion of the activity will result in physical punishment. If the adult expresses sufficient anger at the beginning of the sequence, the child moves on to another activity before the adult is moved to action.

The testing of boundaries among young children provides them with frequent interactions and opportunities to explore their environment. Children are permitted considerable experimentation and to challenge the dominant position of the adults. In many cases, children are allowed to reverse the dominance hierarchy in situational events. The individual needs and desires of children are given expression in their behavior.

When children are between two and three years of age they have mastered many activities and mothers often describe with obvious pride how a little

child can "do for himself." One young mother staying at home with her two year old and her sister's infant was explaining how the baby kept her tied down. She felt that her daughter was "no trouble" because she could "pretty well take care of herself." When the mother wanted to stay in bed in the morning the little girl would get out of bed, go to the bathroom independently and then to the kitchen to get her breakfast. She could locate crackers or bread to eat and then turn on the television and watch it until her mother got up. This child was similar in ability to other children of her age.

During the years between birth and three years of age children learn a great deal about themselves, those in the family and public and private behavior. An environment filled with body contact provides many pleasurable experiences in sucking, eating, playing and cuddling. Experimentation with the senses occurs regularly and is provided by all members of the family. Differentiation in expected behaviors of male and female children is expressed verbally by adults, in the behaviors of children in play and in response to stimuli from adults. It appears that the basis for a high degree of personal independence, self-reliance and individualism within a loosely structured and highly functional household is laid during the first three years.

### Childhood

The characteristics identified in early childhood continue to develop but interactional changes occur in the family after the child reaches three years of age. A great reduction in interaction rates between adults and children occurs after the third year and continues throughout

childhood. Greater independence of adults and the amount of time spent in children's play groups are notable changes. The importance of the "gang of older children" in the family is mentioned for children about three years of age and older in another study among southern blacks (Young 1970:282).

An examination of the children's behaviors at about three years of age reveals a sudden change in interaction patterns when they become members of the play group. Children gain considerable independence of adults at this time. They usually retire and rise according to a schedule they regulate and rarely sleep during the day. Meals are usually prepared for them but if not, they are able to find fruit outdoors or snacks indoors to satisfy hunger. They dress themselves, unassisted in most cases, and select their own clothing. Older siblings or adult women usually comb their hair, a procedure that takes 15 minutes or more for girls but only a couple of minutes for boys. When young children need assistance an older sibling, cousin or sometimes a young friend renders aid. The mother becomes the supervisor of play group activities but close tactile relationships end. Children continue to be subordinate partners in the relationship with the mothers but they escape outdoors and express their feelings and ideas in a children's play group.

Children's play groups usually form outside the house and are composed of children from two or more households. They spend most of the daylight hours outside and engage in a variety of activities. Running, playing in the sand, collecting ripe fruit and nuts, playing ball and teasing one another are among their occupations. Play groups often venture into the house to request food, interact briefly with adults, tattle or drift into indoor play. The presence of the play group in the house is short lived.

The noise, commotion and confusion created by five or more children of this age are more than adults are willing to tolerate. As soon as the loud noise, pushing and running start they are commanded to go outside. Sometimes they are slow to comply but the entire group is not permitted to remain indoors. In rainy weather, porches, bedrooms and living rooms are the locations of play for one or more young household members, but the entire group does not stay in one house during bad weather.

At times the group returns repeatedly to the house requesting food or drink. The mother grows weary of their demands and says, "Why you always in here looking up in my face?" Her response reflects at once her irritation at their frequent demands and her own importance demonstrated by need fulfillment. When there are older children in the play group they do not interrupt the activities of the mother so frequently. An older child quietly enters the house, secures the items desired by the group and quietly exits. Self-reliance and cooperation are praised by mothers.

Customarily, older siblings in the play group look out for the needs of the younger members. In later childhood girls become quite preoccupied with taking care of the young children. They are intensely interested in infants and babies and seize every opportunity to play, present them with toys, talk, feed and hold them. These behaviors are a prelude to their own intense emotional involvement with child care in adolescence and adulthood. Their opportunities to handle and interact with infants are frequent but of fairly short duration because they are considered too inexperienced and rough with delicate babies. Despite their absorbing interest in babies they are relegated to the play group where they offer protection to the younger members there.



There are few rules governing the activities of the play group. As long as disturbances do not result in injury or come repeatedly to the attention of the mother, anything goes. Children play, share, horde, tussle, shout and interact in a highly physical and verbal way. There are subtle differences between the behavior of boys and girls in the play group. Some of these are reinforced by the mother and others seem to develop unencouraged. Girls are expected to stay within the yards surrounding the houses, but boys are permitted a greater range and go into the thickets, briars and woods which lie beyond the yard. Boys, who are considered rougher than girls, are not trusted with girls out of the hearing of the mother.

Older girls are more cooperative and protective of the little children and are encouraged to take care of them by their mothers. Girls are not permitted so far away from home in the play group but they are allowed to spend more time in the house. They are taught the fundamentals of cooking, cleaning and child care through observation and example.

Boys are permitted greater freedom beyond the home. If they do not return to the house when they are expected (usually at dusk) no great concern is expressed. It is assumed that boys can take care of themselves and stay out of situations of conflict with older males or the law. Girls are expected to be in the house for the evening at an earlier hour and greater care is taken that they are not in dangerous company. Little girls, three and four years of age, are not permitted to venture from the yard to search for fruit with groups of boys. It is felt that the behavior of the boys is unpredictable and that mothers should not "take chances" with their daughters.

The learning of appropriate sex role behavior is indirect. Girls about three years of age are taught not to sit with legs separated over the arms

of a chair when wearing a dress. The instructions are not explicit as to purpose, nor are they consistently reinforced. The girl wouldn't be instructed in the proper way to sit if she were wearing long pants. Gradually, the girl learns that she has both valuable and dangerous potential. Most mothers agree that girls have to be "watched closer" than boys.

Family members show little concern with modesty. During most of the year clothes are an inconvenient necessity and as few as possible are worn. Women are often at home in their bras, shorts unzipped and barefoot. Males usually wear slacks and shirt or go bare chested. The clothing of children is usually minimal. Most female children usually wear a shirt or dress while boys are usually bare chested. In the home little about the adult human body is unknown to children although some private areas remain. Nearly all adults agree that some personal affairs should not be witnessed by children or explained to them. There is a taboo against children witnessing sexual intercourse. Children who share their mothers' beds are asleep when their parents have sexual relations, according to them. No child would dare question what might have transpired when they were supposed to be asleep. The patterns of communications are such that the personal affairs of adults are not questioned by children.

Children learn from about three years of age onward not to question the activities they observe at home. Their verbal communication is almost exclusively with other children except when requesting something from an adult or being questioned by him. The restricted exchange of information between parent and child is transferred to interactions with other adults beyond the household. Children's verbal communication with one another

is often intense and their vocabulary reflects their interests and activities. The patterns learned at home and in the play group are carried over into other situations limiting the amount of information children disseminate about home. The communication pattern involving limited disclosure about personal behavior, parental activities and household resources learned in childhood is refined in later years.

During childhood independence of the mother, interaction in children's play group, expectation of sex role and household patterns are learned. Boys are permitted greater freedom outside the house and spend more time outside. Girls are quieter, more protective and tend to be favored by mothers more than active, aggressive males. Children have few responsibilities beyond taking care of themselves and looking after younger siblings.

The experiences of childhood prepare children to participate in school, church activities and other events independent of adult supervision. In early childhood and infancy adults cater to and interact intensely with children. They represent personal accomplishment and continuation of the descent group. The stress in childhood socialization on independence, self-reliance and decision making prepares children to become youth who can function beyond the home in a wide variety of situations.

## CHAPTER 9

### PART II CONCLUSIONS

In Part II the role of kinship and family is examined through the kinship system, the organization of descent groups, households and childhood socialization. There is a consistent pattern through each chapter on flexibility and function. The ambilateral kinship system permits affiliation through males or females and emphasizes residence as a determining factor in affiliation to descent groups. While there is a tendency to stress linkages through males, female links are reckoned sufficiently often to be a normal pattern. The importance of residence is seen in household membership and there is a tendency to reside with female linkages.

Women tend to prefer to live near kinswomen because it permits greater flexibility in household routines and the sharing of maternal role. The distribution of maternal responsibility among females allows them to be employed, and engage in social activities but throughout adulthood they are rarely uninvolved with children. Households often have females from two or more generations involved in child care activities. Children usually interact with several relatives of both sexes from two or more generations, contributing to variety in relationships and experiences.

Household organization is loosely structured so that children usually live with more than one maternal figure and identify with the

descent group they live with most often. Children are central to the kinship system because they are the personnel replenishing the generational cycle. The socialization process prepares children to assume roles in the ambilateral system where they ultimately decide where their commitments lie. Within the flexible structure of descent groups, households and interpersonal relationships children are prepared to enter roles in the community and to develop relationships with non-kin.

In community and kinship there is a clear division between expectations of male and female behavior. In kinship, descent group, households and particularly in child care the role of females predominates. Males are dominant in highly visible roles in the community, in stores, shops, sports, employment and ritual. The division of labor is a major theme seen in every institution and in the kinship system. Socialization in childhood is the initial training for sex role identification and it becomes more evident later.

Part III is devoted to the process by which females learn sex role in adolescence. When girls leave the play group for more mature activities, they become involved in household activities, all girl peer groups and in courtship. Their relationships in the household are altered and they develop various connections to community institutions. After a few years they usually become mothers revitalizing the system with personnel and proving their womanly status. The process of family and community is elucidated in Part III through the analysis of female maturation and motherhood.

PART III

FEMALE ADOLESCENCE -- A RITE OF PASSAGE

The arrangement of institutions in the community and the enduring groups that contribute to it were presented in Part I. These interdependent units represent the organizations beyond the family and kinship system maintaining the viability of the community as a social entity. While the personnel in such institutions change from time to time the basic organization and function are relatively stable. The social structure of the community is dependent upon the continual production of personnel to fill positions in it. The kinship system and childhood socialization are examined in Part II. The production and grooming of children in descent groups and households provide insight into the organization and replication of personnel. Both community institutions and descent groups experience alterations in personnel through generational time. The ongoing viability of the community depends upon a system, weakly perceived by community members, for the production and education of personnel to fill critical positions in the social structure. The production and education of such personnel is accomplished within the household setting during the early years of the life cycle. Descent group membership and the socialization process, described in Part II, prepares offspring for roles in the social structure.

The discussion of socialization in Part II ended with childhood but the process of social and physical maturation is amplified in Part III. Here, the purpose is to analyze the behaviors, relationships and events occurring in adolescence and to describe the transition from girlhood to

womanhood. Adolescence, related to biological change, is defined as "the transitional period between puberty (boyhood or girlhood) and adult stages of development" (Barnhart 1966:17). Adolescence is a transitional phase of social ambiguity and disequilibrium in Edge Crossing. An examination of transitional states and their characteristics clarify the analytical frame of reference in Part III.

The most useful treatment of transitional states, for our purposes, is offered by van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1969) whose formulations provide a framework to analyze situations involving ambiguous status. Van Gennep (1960), writing in the first decade of this century, identified a common pattern observable in the various transitional phases in the life cycle. He termed these "rites de passage," and described birth, puberty ceremonies, marriage, fatherhood, pregnancy, childbirth and death according to the pattern in each of these transitions in diverse societies in the world.

The periodic changes experienced through life are not only personal identity crises, but events receiving recognition by society and its social groupings. Van Gennep has shown that rites of passage are marked by three phases, separation, transition and incorporation. Each of these phases is not equally well marked in every ceremony, nor are the same rites equally elaborated in different societies. But, transitions from one social status to another usually involve the three phase process.

Separation, the first phase, is comprised of symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual from an earlier status in the social structure, from a set of biological or social conditions or



from both. During the intervening phase, that of transition, the characteristics of the person are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase, incorporation, the person is in a relatively stable state once more. He has rights and obligations to others of a clearly defined or structural type; he is expected to behave in accordance with certain expected norms and standards binding on persons of a particular social status in a given social system.

In some rites of passage a duplication of the three phase process may be observed. Adolescence in Edge Crossing is a rite of passage with three additional transitions (pregnancy, childbirth and the acceptance of motherhood) referred to here as sub-phases.

Turner (1969) has provided considerable insight into the relationships between transitional states and the social structure. Most definitions of social structure involve a hierarchical arrangement of positions, enduring groups and adaptations in these through time. Another dimension of society is seen as community, bounded not by territory but expressed in the unity among those who identify with one another. In this conception of community, the designation "communitas" or "fellowship" is preferred to community because it differentiates it from more spatially bound definitions of society or community. Society, according to this conception, is relatively unstructured and undifferentiated and emphasizes the cooperation and communication of equal individuals who submit as a group to the authority of ritual elders. Communitas and fellowship are most recognizable during transitional periods.

Social life and the experience of those who pass through the social structure from birth to death involve successive experiences of *communitas* and structure, homogeneity and differentiation. The passage from one relatively stable state to another is through a limbo of statuslessness, ambiguity and lack of structure. Each person's life contains periods alternating between structure and *communitas*, between status and role on the one hand and fellowship on the other.

In this study the primary interest is in one extended liminal phase, that bracketing childhood and adulthood among females. The institutions and division of labor, discussed in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, illustrate hierarchical arrangements of social structure. The discussion of ritual where all segments of the community come together to renew bonds reflect society in "*communitas*" or "fellowship." The release from structure and return to it, in an altered position, effects adjustment to life crises. During transitional phases of life crisis events and other related conditions involving liminality, low status and *communitas*, persons share a common characteristic; they fall in the interstices of social structure, are on its margins or occupy its lowest rung (Turner 1969:125). Females in adolescence undergo continual adjustment generally having each of the characteristics mentioned above during the process.

Before turning to the analysis of female maturation a preview of the material is offered. In early adolescence the interaction patterns of childhood are altered. Girls participate in interaction sets in the home and community in ways reflecting greater responsibility and independence. The transitional phase of adolescence is marked by strained relationships with adults, housekeeping responsibilities and caring for children. These

activities, well established before girls become actively involved in courtship, retain them in the home and family. In courtship girls interact in pair events with males having no identification with family and household. Once involved in courtship girls spend a great deal of time establishing and maintaining the pair relationships. Pair events in courtship are supported by the set events in peer groups but peer groups are important before courtship is established. Older girls, comfortable with courting relationships, transmit to younger members information about personal appearance, hygiene and courtship behavior.

Adolescents typically function in three areas, housekeeping within the home, courtship in the community and in peer groups operating in both home and community. Their roles lack definition for they are neither children nor women and they do not identify fully with any role. The ambiguity in their positions finds resolution when they become mothers between two and ten years after the onset of adolescence. The processes of pregnancy, childbirth and accepting motherhood are the three sub-phases in the rite of passage in adolescence. Girls are admitted to womanly status when they become the primary nurturant figure for their own infants. In Part III, separation from childhood (seen in domestic responsibility) courtship and peer groups are examined separately but courtship and peer group activities are closely inter-related.

## CHAPTER 10

### SEPARATION FROM CHILDHOOD

Outdoor play groups, self-reliance and responsibility for self and younger play group members are discussed in Chapter 8 as characteristic of pre-adolescents. In early adolescence, girls become involved in domestic activities effecting a separation from childhood. Responsibilities in the home, set events in peer groups and pair events in courtship are interrelated experiences central to adolescent maturation. Their behaviors in the home are discussed in this chapter while in Chapters 11 and 12, respectively, courtship and peer groups are analyzed. Many events and experiences affect the maturation process; the discussion is ordered by the social and spatial realities of adolescent behavior.

Among girls the importance of the play group diminishes between ten and 12 years of age, at about the same time secondary sexual characteristics develop. Initially behavioral changes are subtle but when interactions within the play group diminish more time is spent in the house, assisting in household tasks, caring for babies and attending to personal appearance. Young adolescent girls devote considerable time to their hair. They roll, straighten, brush, pick, plait and dye their hair and experiment with coiffures. Hair grooming is a recently acquired skill because until the age of ten or 12 their hair is combed and plaited by women without consideration to their desires. Clothing, selected in

accordance with youthful styles, is altered to fit in ways they think becoming. Clothing, hair styles and daily activity patterns are changes ending girls' interactions in the play group. Girls are distinctive in dress, grooming and behavior from women, children and men.

The self-reliance and responsibility in childhood become more pronounced in adolescence contributing to strained relationships with adults. The interactions between a woman and her daughter follow a consistent pattern, in many ways similar to the pattern of discipline in early childhood. Adults usually assert their dominance over adolescent girls without physical punishment. Confrontations between women and their daughters center on almost anything, frequently money, since girls often request between 25 cents and a dollar from their mothers before leaving the house to be with friends.

The mother, always reluctant to meet the girl's frequent needs, initially refuses her request. When the request for money is repeated the verbal component of the interaction is contributed by the mother. She speaks uninterrupted for ten minutes on the characteristics of youth, the reasons they will never amount to anything, the troubles they cause and the teachings of the Bible regarding the proper behavior of children. It is always mentioned that when she was young, girls were serious minded, respectful and helpful at home. During the outburst the girl stands facing her mother, hands at her sides, eyes downcast and shifting her weight from one foot to the other. When the mother has finished her statements and pauses, the girl reiterates her original request. Her mother again launches into a long discourse. The interaction, sometimes lasting half an hour, usually ends with the mother

granting the girl's request and promising that it will not happen again. The girl's success in obtaining the favor is related to her non-argumentative response and posture of humility. Dressed and poised at the door, the girl awaits cessation of the tirade and fulfillment of her request, but she does not leave while being spoken to even if the request is not granted. The ultimate authority of adults is rarely challenged by girls and they rarely speak to them disrespectfully.

Although mother-daughter relationships are characteristically strained, it is in the home that girls learn housekeeping and child care, important for attaining womanhood. In childhood, girls are not permitted to be fully responsible for babies but in adolescence girls are encouraged to learn baby care through observation of other females and they are eager to be around children. Girls under 16 years of age do not usually have children of their own but eagerly seek out opportunities to interact with infants available at home or in related households. When girls are taking care of babies their charges are often mistaken for their own. Girls enjoy deceiving local residents and outsiders into thinking that they have one or more children when in reality they have none. Most adolescents are very comfortable with babies, have a repertoire of techniques for keeping them happy and a general knowledge about them. They make accurate observations about the needs of babies and easily establish rapport with them.

By the mid-teens girls have refined the ability to talk on the telephone, feed an infant, direct older children outside and prepare food simultaneously. When there is a baby in the home and the mother works, it is the adolescent who cares for the baby and runs the household in her mother's absence. In some cases, the adult woman is the official

baby sitter for a baby but her adolescent daughter is primarily responsible for his care. Girls attend school about six hours daily but spend much of their time with the babies and children under their direct supervision. Adolescents enjoy baby care but often state that they do not like older children.

Babies are more pleasurable than older children for several reasons. They sleep a lot and cannot get into things. Girls can care for them while carrying on other activities. Care of a young baby permits intense, intimate interaction for fairly short periods. Older children demand less intense attention more frequently and often require discipline.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps one of the reasons girls do not prefer older children is that they remind them of their recently abandoned childhood while babies are associated with womanhood.

Adolescents demand and receive obedience from older children left in their care. Just as adults threaten to cut a switch to use on children, so do adolescents, but they are less reluctant to use them. They do not have the status of an adult and find it necessary to reaffirm their dominant position by force.

Girls run households very efficiently. They send children three years of age and older outdoors. Toddler babies present difficulties but special treats like candy or soda and a free rein in the house usually keep them quiet. When older children are outside and the younger ones are quiet, the girls watch television, talk with friends, rest, eat and listen to music. They also sweep the floors, dust,

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<sup>1</sup>The diminished interest in older children is reflected in their participation in play groups at three years of age (see Chapter 8).

rearrange furniture, cook, wash dishes, do the laundry and ironing. Their performance at home is similar to that of mature women except that the household tasks are done less thoroughly. The role of adolescents as surrogate mothers establishes their claim to limited female role away from play groups.

Girls activities in the home are one dimension of adolescent behavior. There is an emphasis in early adolescence on domesticity, preparing them for adulthood. After they are established in housekeeping and baby care girls also become involved in courtship and peer group activities. These activities periodically remove girls from the home and involve them in interaction pairs and sets expressing their participation in community as fellowship among equals. In the next two chapters courtship and peer groups, two closely interrelated dimensions of adolescent behavior are analyzed.



## CHAPTER 11

### COURTSHIP

The behavior of girls, separated from the play group but not yet involved in the full range of adolescent behavior, are discussed in the previous chapter. Two complimentary areas of social relationships in courtship and peer groups are discussed in Chapters 11 and 12. Courtship occurring in pair events (one male and one female) and peer group interactions flowing from set events reflect the movement of girls out of peer groups into courting pairs. The rhythm of pair events and set events in the maturation process illustrates the organization of adolescent social relations.

Courtship and peer groups are interrelated, their separation in the text reflects the natural interactional sequencing. Courtship, bringing together structurally different persons, involves series of pair events developing out of group activities where males and females come together and express fellowship. Girls move out of the hierarchy of structure in family and community into courting situations. Courtship relationships are initiated at school activities, sports events, shops and stores, in fact, wherever males and females meet.

In courting situations the expression of fellowship is the rule. Girls say that going to shops in the evening helps to release tensions built up by structured relationships with adults at home and in the

educational environment. The shop is physically and socially the antithesis of domestic life. The nocturnal activity in shops, the music, dancing, refreshments and companionship of peers all contribute to the ritual expression of *communitas* and fellowship. Shops, providing ample opportunity to meet and mingle with males, have an atmosphere accentuating feelings of unity and reducing the opposition between the sexes. Relief of tension, comradeship and personal gratification are expressed as male-female sets pair off, ordering the prevailing egalitarian atmosphere.

Courtship relationships form between almost any male and female beyond the age of childhood. Universal availability of males and females is assumed until otherwise informed but girls usually court males between their own age and ten to 15 years their senior. Some categories of persons are usually less often involved in courtship, these include married women, persons in poor health and the very old.

Among girls the stress of attending school and household responsibilities build up through the week. They feel frustrated and "held in" by the weekend and go to the shops and other events in the evening to experience release. Girls, dressing and behaving provocatively, dance, laugh, drink and talk at the shop. On some occasions the group experience provides relief. At other times when attractive males are available, or they are involved with a particular male, the group expression of relief is insufficient and the physical need for sexual relations is experienced. Girls state that they feel like they will "go crazy" if they don't get out and "be with" someone. Girls feel that they "have it so hard" at home that when they get out they "let loose" completely. One girl developed headaches at least weekly unless she

had sexual contact and usually experienced relief of a "headachy feeling" after having sexual relations. It is believed that feelings are human nature and that they cannot be totally controlled. Physical activity relieves emotional and physical tension and helps maintain equilibrium in the body and social space. Tensions in structured relationships are made more bearable by group expressions in shops and in courtship pair events.

Girls organize their courtship relationships to maximize their freedom. Their strategies permit them to remain attached to the family while experimenting with a variety of relationships. There is a tendency to maintain courtship relationships that hold potential for permanency but the emphasis is on present activities, events and pleasures. Females compare permanent binding courtship relationships with their home situation. In each they feel that they are tied down and without sufficient freedom to behave like they feel. Most girls alternate between identification and support with the family and with males achieving a degree of independence unavailable through total commitment to either. They enjoy freedom and are loathe to be permanently or legally bound to a male when allegiance to their families offers them liberty and security.

Courtship patterns among adolescents reflect fluidity in partners and changing courtship patterns. Girls tend to maintain courtship bonds with all males in whom they are actively interested. At times they number five or more and at others diminish to one. Married men are considered eligible for courtship but because they always have a wife to go home to they are often not preferred. Girls are very reluctant to become attached to one male. They may "go with" one male and inform

other interests of his primary importance but they do not completely sever their ties with other available males. Diversity in partners is more easily achieved when one or two of them live outside the community, but this is not necessarily the case. The potential for conflict among males over females is high but girls usually manage to manipulate their relationships without violence; they have numerous role models to follow in this endeavor. It is assumed, and understood by girls when they begin courtship, that few men are "contented" with one woman for very long. This contributes to the pattern of having multiple courtship relationships.

According to girls the practice of "special company" is out of style because males would not keep up their end of the bargain. They would get a girl's "company" and then not come to see her or take her anywhere. The girl, "stuck" at home waiting for him, was forbidden to go out and find companionship. Modern girls go out when they want, see whomever they like and are not "tied down." The freedom to manage courtship independent of adult control provides girls with a variety of options contributing considerable individual freedom in courtship.

The patterns associated with pair events in courtship can best be seen through a case study. The involvements of one girl over a year's time are described below and an interpretation of courtship behavior follows it.

#### The Courtship Process: -- A Case Study

Frankie Mae Wilson is an 18 year old resident of Edge Crossing who graduated from high school in June. In January she was courting

James, a man eight years her senior who had a "good" income.<sup>1</sup> James lived in a community six miles from Edge Crossing with his mother. James gave Frankie about \$20.00 weekly and she thought of him as a good provider who could afford a home for her. Although she and James got along fairly well, he did not trust her and questioned her closely about her activities when he was away for a few days. She always assured him that "it be just the way you leave it," even though she was periodically seeing another man. James had many good qualities but Frankie was not "crazy" about him and felt that their sexual relationship left something to be desired. She was much more satisfied in sex with the other man but he moved to Washington, D.C. in February.

Frankie was anxious to leave her grandmother's home because she was "dogged" (nagged) too much. In February she mounted a campaign to induce James to marry her. She pledged fidelity to him, satisfied him sexually whenever they were out and frequently discussed with him how lovely life would be if they had their own place (and bed). James was not enthusiastic about marriage. Frankie sensed his feelings and altered her approach. She withheld sexual favors, saying that he did not "own" her. They fussed some but James remained noncommittal.<sup>2</sup> Withholding sex from James did not change his mind but he did agree to marriage "sometime." He gave Frankie a ring, a band with five small stones embedded in it. This was tangible proof of his interests and they resumed sexual relations. Frankie continued to press him to marry. He said he wanted her to

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<sup>1</sup>Girls feel that an income of \$500 monthly is good.

<sup>2</sup>Frankie said he was reluctant because he had a girl who had children "for him" but when he was gone once, she went off with another man.

finish school. As April slipped into May, they had not made arrangements for a "place to stay" and Frankie became suspicious. She resorted to withholding sex and they eventually had an argument. Frankie threw the ring in his face and said that she did not want to see him anymore. There were a couple of brief reconciliations. James came to see her, gave her some money, and tried to reestablish his position, but she refused to be involved with him.

After graduation exercises she stayed in Leesburg visiting her brother's girlfriend, Sue, for two weeks. She met William in a shop on Friday night through Sue. William, 19 years of age, was an entering college freshman and a football player. She and William were immediately attracted to one another and went out Saturday and Sunday night. She refused to have sexual relations with him on Saturday because she did not want him to think she was "too fast." But on Sunday night they went to X-rated movies. The movies excited her (she describes this as not being able to keep still, moving her legs together and feeling like doing what is on the screen). William's sexual prowess was delightful. They had intercourse five times and she did not get back to Sue's until dawn. Their relationship was very satisfactory sexually but was marred by the prospect of his leaving for college in August.

Frankie spent about half the summer in Leesburg and half of it in Edge Crossing. William's talk about their living together after he was established in school pleased Frankie. But Frankie's mother and grandmother were not so impressed with William. They reasoned that he might get Frankie to support him while he was in school and then leave her for a woman with a college education after he finished. They were concerned because it would be so long before he could do anything for her. Frankie

was irritated about her family's interference but she and William could not get established for several months so she had to endure their comments.

Over the summer irregularities crept into the once dazzling relationship. William often preferred playing cards to going out with Frankie. In addition, Frankie suspected that he was involved with the mother of his baby whom he maintained he no longer courted. Frankie, understanding his concern for his child, and unable to prove that he was involved with the mother, did not say anything to him about it.

After William left for college Frankie wrote him twice a week and received long letters from him regularly. Each wondered whether the other was keeping promised fidelity to each other.

Frankie did not court for nearly two months, honoring her pledge to William. She was experiencing mounting sexual frustration and knew she needed to go out and enjoy herself. At work she met an attractive man, about 15 years older than she, separated from his wife and a "sport."<sup>1</sup> He had "good" hair, light skin, was of medium build and dressed "out of this world." John, Frankie felt, knew he could always "get his way with women" and she wanted to show him that all girls are not alike. But, when he grabbed her in the food storage area and kissed her long and hard she knew she wanted to get to know him better.

He started calling her and coming by the house. Frankie, despite her interest and sexual frustration, was cool to him, told him that she was not like all the other girls and restricted their contact to kissing

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<sup>1</sup>"Sports" are men with big, fast cars, expensive clothes, good looks; polite speech and who use their eyes to express appreciation of feminine charms.

and petting. Frankie was enjoying the relationship. She teased John by telling him how "hot" she felt, dressed so that her best attributes were either revealed or closely outlined and invited him over when no one was at home. John was increasingly anxious to have relations with her and was somewhat piqued at her reticence.

John was to come over on Thursday afternoon. Frankie finally decided that she would give him what he wanted. She soaked in the bathtub with perfumed water, fixed her hair just so, applied her make-up carefully, dressed in a new outfit and thought about how long it had been since she had been with anyone. John did not appear. Frankie was furious. In effect she had been beaten at her own game. She wanted to hold John at bay to show him that he wasn't as cool as he thought he was but she knew that if a girl holds out too long that the man will lose interest. When John called her the next day she acted mad, said she didn't want to talk to him or see him. Eventually, he apologized for not seeing her and promised he would not do it again. In the course of the conversation she let him know what he had missed. He told her he would pick her up after work.

They went to his boss's house, where there was a refrigerator full of beer and a king size bed. Frankie told John that she had changed her mind and that she wanted him to take her back home. John persuaded her to stay and Frankie discovered why he thought he was so good. She said to me, "You heard that a small man carry a big load? Oh child, let me tell you, it be true."

Eventually, Frankie told John about William and he agreed to leave her alone when William came home. John was agreeable to their just having a "good time" because he liked to play the field. In time Frankie



came to like John both as a lover and a man. He did not seem so sure of himself and "sporty" as when they first met. She saw John every week and thought of the relationship as a convenient release for her sexual frustration.

Quite by chance Frankie met George, a mason, 28 years of age, from a community 75 miles from Edge Crossing. He was working in the development where Frankie's older sister lived. She and her younger sister met two men at the mailbox when they were visiting her older sister. Frankie was immediately taken by George. She and her sister went to the mobile home where the men stayed that evening. They talked, watched television and drank. Frankie and George went into a bedroom "to talk" and eventually had sexual relations. When they were invited back the next night Frankie wore a lavender negligee and a trench coat. Frankie found George a fantastic lover, better than the others. She felt somewhat guilty about having sexual relations with him so soon after meeting him; it was something she has never done before. When Frankie told George about William he understood her situation. He was married and had children whom he loved dearly. He wanted to leave his wife but was afraid that she would not take care of the children.

During the first two months of their courtship Frankie and George saw one another all weekend bi-weekly. George had a number of "side hustles" complimenting his mason's income. He and Frankie traveled around the state visiting his family and lounging around pools at large motels. Frankie was impressed with George's generosity, kindness and attachment to his children. Although she and George became close she was still committed to William.

William returned to his home from college at Christmas time. Frankie spent the holidays at Sue's house. When she was with William she felt that they were made for one another. She was concerned that she had not been faithful but suspected that the same was true of him. She confirmed her suspicions when she overheard William and Sue's father talking over a card game. William said that there were plenty of girls at college and that they could visit them in their dorm rooms. Frankie was not surprised that he had courted but was very angry when she confirmed that he was still seeing his baby's mother. She said that it's not as good "to go with a man from away" because a girl doesn't "know his territory" and she can't keep up with him. She also came to feel that William was taking from her more than he gave because he had her send him money at college but never gave her money even when he had it. She could not stand the thought of his spending her money on another woman.

After the holidays Frankie went to Leesburg less frequently even though William did not return to college. George started talking about helping her with a "place to stay," and getting a car for her. Frankie appreciated George's qualities, including a solid income, seriously considered his offers and backed away from her relationship with William. Her absence from Leesburg caused William to talk in concrete terms about their future. He said he was going to Chicago to work and taking Frankie with him. They would live with his sister until they could get a place of their own. Frankie commented, "A man don't start tightening up on his end until you start loosening up on yours."

Eventually Frankie eased away from William, never telling him that she had found someone else. If George had not continued his attention

she would have renewed her relationships with John and William. Frankie and George now live in University Town. He separated from his wife and Frankie broke off with John.

In Frankie's experiences several patterns in courtship are revealed. Girls court males for various reasons. There is an emphasis on courting males who have something to offer in terms of permanency. Most males are reluctant to be committed but when girls understand courtship and males they can manipulate their relationships to induce males to act. Withholding sex, jealousy and reducing interactions were all employed by Frankie through the year. Frankie was careful not to terminate interactions with William until she was sure of George's sincerity. Girls usually have two or more relationships that can be reestablished when the principal courting pair becomes less attractive.

Although girls tend to desire commitment from males they do not want to have to finance them. This is illustrated in Frankie's mother's and grandmother's concern that William would let her support him. There are many males who permit women to support them, so women are always on guard and require that men pay at least their own way. There is a certain amount of sharing of financing among courting couples but girls look askance at males who do not assume financial responsibility.

In addition to the more serious aspects of courtship, it can also be a game, as seen in Frankie's and John's relationship. Girls enjoy tempting and teasing males. They usually have a wide assortment of techniques to entice them and to satisfy them sexually. They are proud of their expertise and are always interested in learning more about men and sex. Frankie enjoyed both John and George because they taught her

exciting and novel things to do sexually. All courtships have a strong element of play in them. Couples sometimes agree to avoid sexual relations to see who "can hold out the longest." Females usually win but voluntary abstinence increases the fun of relations and that is the purpose of the game.

In courtship there is a tendency to use promises of fidelity as a means of strengthening relationships. Most males and females do not really expect to be faithful but do try to keep their partner from learning of other courtship pairs in which they are involved. Frankie did not ever tell William about her other involvements but she maintained the integrity of her relationship with William by telling the others about him. In the end, it was the jealousy she aroused in George that effected his separation from his wife.

In most courtships compatible personalities, financial arrangements and sexual satisfaction are the binding forces. Most girls do not talk about "love." They speak about "being crazy" about a man, meaning that they cannot keep their mind off of him, want him permanently and would "do anything" to "get him." Frankie was "crazy" about William but her feelings changed when she discovered George's potential. Girls tend to be "crazy" about males early in courtship days, later they have a more rational approach to courtship and its meaning.

Courtship patterns are both gamesmanship and serious negotiations. In courtship there is an emphasis on pleasure rather than commitment and the maintenance of simultaneous pair relationships. Courtship requires careful negotiations for girls to secure economic resources from males without becoming bound to them. The relative strength of females is evident in the highly independent way they organize pair events. The

reduction of interactions in one pair event does not terminate the potential of the relationship but permits girls to engage in other courtship activities.

Although it was not emphasized in this chapter, girls usually cooperate in courtship. They band together in peer groups to facilitate learning courtship rules and to meet males. Girls become involved in set events in peer groups and spin out into courting pairs. The process of group formation and peer group activities are explored in Chapter 12.

## CHAPTER 12

### THE PEER GROUP

In the last chapter courtship, a consuming interest of adolescents, was presented as a series of pair events developing out of group events in shops and other social activities. Girls operating in set events support their courtship endeavors. This chapter analyzes the peer group behavior of girls in courtship.

Female groups of three or four members develop out of kin and friendship bonds. The nucleus of a peer group is usually the adolescent girls from related households but kinship is not necessarily a requirement for membership. The girls maintain high rates of interactions, seeing one another or talking on the telephone daily. Peer groups do not have rigid boundaries but fluctuate as courtship and other interests draw members into the group. At any time there are about ten groups operating in the community tied together by members who slip periodically from group to group. Involvement in different peer groups is usually related to courtship. A girl moves into and interacts intensely with the peer group of a boyfriend's sisters while they court but interactions in that group are terminated when their courtship ceases.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Males are not admitted to girls' peer groups although they often operate on the fringe of the group. These males, called "friend boys," assist girls in courtship but are never their sexual partners. They are structurally similar to brothers and are, in fact, related to some of the group's members.

Membership in peer groups, most important in early adolescence, helps girls adjust to heterosexual relations. Usually the group's members are within three or four years of the same age. Membership in peer groups is necessarily fluid because maturation removes personnel from the group and younger members are admitted to membership. By the time girls leave school peer group interactions diminish and some groups dissolve because there are no incoming members.

The entrance into an adolescent peer group usually coincides with the separation from the play group. The novice, recently drawn into the peer group, is guided in her pursuit of femininity<sup>1</sup> and males. The novice-veteran relationship is maintained for a period of a year or more. The novice gradually gains sufficient expertise in courtship and personal behavior that guidance is unnecessary. The sharing of knowledge and experiences becomes more important and intensifies the bonds between them. The primary function of the peer group is in assisting members in courtship. The examples that follow are set events illustrating the role of the peer group in facilitating male-female pairs.

#### Novice-Veteran Relationship

Courtship is organized around pair events but peer group members often influence the courtship behavior of girls. The novice-veteran relationship serves to educate the novice in courtship behaviors and includes an element of social control, as illustrated by the sequence below.

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<sup>1</sup>The novice-veteran relationship helps to ease the novice through menarche, techniques of feminine hygiene and early sexual encounters.

Three girls 18, 16 and 14 years of age are alone at the eldest girl's house. The two eldest girls, Marlene and Linda, sit at the kitchen table. Marlene's sister, the youngest of the three, is in the living room watching television and periodically entering the discussion. Her presence is not central to the events described here but she is a member of the group.

Marlene has a steady boyfriend with a good job and they are going to live together in University Town when she finds a job. Linda goes with a disabled Viet Nam veteran named Bill who has a temporary cast on his leg from below the ankle to above the knee. Although Bill has a steady income and a nice car Linda is not satisfied with him because he doesn't come to see her often enough. She occasionally sees a married man, Joe, 20 years of age.

Marlene and Linda are talking about sexual satisfaction. They agree that all men are alike, they cannot be trusted but are good for some things. The conversation is lighthearted and there is a lot of laughter. Linda is considering breaking off her relationship with Bill because they have been "fussing" about his lack of attentiveness. The cast on his leg becomes the subject of discussion. Linda says that she hasn't been with Bill for over two weeks<sup>1</sup> but that when she does she'll be "hot." She is joking about having to assume a female superior position when they have relations because of his cast and wonders whether relations will be satisfactory in an unusual position. Marlene assures her that he will be "hot" too and will do anything to have

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<sup>1</sup>He has been in the hospital.



relations. Marlene, laughing, stiffens her leg as if it were in a cast and moves about acting like Bill trying to gain access to his partner. Both girls laugh heartily and then Marlene says that Bill will really have to work to get Linda in that spot because Linda has been seeing Joe and will not be as "hot" as Bill. Linda denies Marlene's claim, saying that she and Joe have broken off. Marlene counters that she has seen his car at Linda's house. Marlene tells Linda she had better "watch out" because if Bill finds out about Joe, Linda will get "hurt." Marlene swings her fist through the air to indicate that Bill will slug her in the jaw with his fist. Linda insists that she isn't seeing Joe. Marlene does not pursue the subject but states, "Well if the money's O.K. and the other's O.K. (meaning sex) you can't ask no more of a man."

Marlene assumes the role of the veteran by reassuring Linda that sex is fun whatever way it's done. Then taking a sterner position she takes Linda to task for going with Joe when Bill thinks he is the only one. The fact that Linda sees Joe is not so unusual except that she is only 16 years of age and Joe is married. Marlene knows that Bill has a very bad temper and of the problems that develop in courtship. Linda, by denying Marlene's allegation, indicates that she is ambivalent about courting the two men. In reality she would rather have a permanent arrangement with Joe, but he is married. Marlene, active as a supportive veteran in the first part of the sequence, warns Linda that her behavior is dangerous. Having brought the matter to light she lets it drop but adds a bit of advice revealing the important ingredients in courtship, money and sex. The sequence demonstrates the role of the veteran and the influence she has in molding the relationships of younger

peers. The girls involved are older than usually found in novice-veteran relationships and this probably explains why Linda is not particularly responsive to Marlene. The interaction also reflects social control, because Linda can't be sure that someone won't tell Bill about Joe. If she gets "hurt" others will not be as sympathetic to her as they would be if she were innocent.

#### Fluctuating Peer Group Membership

The example below illustrates the renewal of peer group ties for a particular purpose. Peer group membership is usually fluid, adapting to the courtship requirements of members. Jean, 17 years of age, courted George, 20 years of age two years ago and was actively involved in a peer group with George's two sisters and her own sister. The courtship was terminated when George became involved with another girl. When his girl friend became pregnant, they married and moved in with her parents. Now George is unhappy and sees Jean intermittently. Jean is still interested in George but her grandmother doesn't approve of her going with a married man.

George received two tickets to a semi-formal dance in University Town and asked Jean to go with him about a month in advance. Jean eagerly accepted but knew that her grandmother would not permit her to go if she knew with whom she was going. Jean renewed her contacts with George's sisters and arranged to spend the weekend of the dance with them. George picked Jean up from his mother's house and returned her there early the next morning. George's mother works an evening shift and was unaware that Jean had been out with George (but didn't care anyway).

While they were at the dance George's sisters stayed at home and planned a story in case Jean's grandmother called.

Peer group membership fluctuates, including members who can assist in courtship and excluding those who do not need the support and assistance the group offers. Jean had not been interacting with George's sisters but when an important event came up she was able to draw them into her group for assistance. The fluidity, based on courtship, is characteristic of peer groups. The social support girls give one another is also seen in their public behavior.

#### Meeting Males -- Group and Pair Events

Joyce, 17 years of age, Debra, 16 years of age and Terry, 18 years of age, are on a shopping excursion in University Town. They laugh and visually examine "soul brothers" they encounter. Each girl sees males she considers attractive and suggests quietly that the others inspect them. As they move along the sidewalk they attract attention, particularly from black males, because they are well proportioned, brightly dressed and noisy. Usually they look at males without "catching their eye" but often males say, "Hello," or "How you?" and the girls respond, "All right."

The girls decide they will go to a cafeteria for a soda. Joyce suggests the location because a male she courts works there. She has not heard from him recently and wants to let him know she is around. The girls enter the cafeteria, looking around in every direction. They get their drinks and take a table. John, Joyce's interest, enters, Joyce looks away from him and the other girls burst into a peal of laughter.

John, of course, notices them and comes over to the table. Debra and Terry continue to laugh, look from John to Joyce and sip their sodas. John stands at the table, Joyce avoids eye contact with him but they talk for two minutes. Then, he states that he has to go back to work and leaves. Joyce sits dreamily sipping her soda while Debra and Terry look at the three other black males present, laugh and whisper, heads together. One of the males standing beside a cigarette machine catches Debra's eye and motions for her to come over. She goes over and they stand talking for about three minutes. When Debra comes back to the table she states, "Shoot, we had us a conversation going there until he saw this," picking up a men's high school ring she is wearing around her neck. She is obviously disappointed at the turn of events, takes the ring off, puts it in her pocket and states, "Now, let me see what else there be." The girls spend 45 minutes in the cafeteria. John comes back to the table twice. He states to Joyce that he is going to New York in two weeks to work but that he will be seeing her. Joyce interprets his statements to mean that he is going to call her before he leaves.

Satisfied, the girls get up and leave. Their behavior illustrates their support in courtship endeavors. All of them actively look at males, make judgments about their attractiveness but stop short of meeting men in the street. In slightly more structured situations, such as the cafeteria presented, girls initiate action. Laughing, whispering and looking, their own interactions elicit responses from males. Of course, they chose a particular cafeteria because Joyce wanted to see a particular male.

Joyce's quiet reticent behavior in John's presence contrasted with Terry's and Debra's giggling and laughter told John that their visit was

no coincidence. Joyce's interpretation of his statements eventually proved accurate. He called her and they went out and had a "good time" before he left for New York.

Peer group members consistently act on the behalf of other members and support their courtship behaviors. Girls in groups of three or four routinely go to the shops and other places of entertainment. Sometimes they meet attractive males but sometimes they return home together too. Peer groups as set events organize to spin girls out in pair events in courtship. After girls are well integrated into courtship they require less social support and often go to evening entertainment with only one other girl but females rarely go anywhere at night alone. Among younger girls more numerous companions more often result in the kind of pair events they seek.

The behavior of adolescent girls involves activities in the home, peer group events and courtship. There is an emphasis on physical pleasure, escaping from the control of adults and mingling with males and females in group situations, expressing the fellowship of equals. Courtship offers an escape from domesticity yet a relationship with one male is too binding. Peer groups are structured to support girls in their maturation. They are not permanent bonds and reflect their role in courtship endeavor. The ebb and flow of interaction in the home, courtship and peer group express the ambiguous status of girls.

The resolution to indefinite status eventually is found in pregnancy. Sometimes pregnancy occurs before girls are integrated into the courtship pattern, for others it occurs at a fortuitous time, when they are involved with a male with whom they want to have a permanent association. Regardless of timing, pregnancy and childbirth and the acceptance of

motherhood serve to alter girls' social relations and admit them to womanly status. This process is examined in the next three chapters, beginning with pregnancy in Chapter 13.

## CHAPTER 13

### PREGNANCY -- ONE SUB-PHASE

The transition from childhood to adulthood is a rite of passage with a long transitional phase. The transition is a period of learning feminine role and lore, courtship and household responsibility. In rites of passage where the transitional phase is elaborate and constitutes an independent state, as in adolescence, the arrangement of the three phases is reduplicated. The analysis of pregnancy, delivery and acceptance of motherhood reveals a reduplication of the process seen in adolescence. In pregnancy alterations in interaction patterns with males, adult females and peers separate the youth from her former social condition. The transitional phase of pregnancy corresponds roughly to the period during which adult women instruct the girl in behaviors appropriate to pregnancy, and warn her of the dangers of childbirth that lie ahead. The phase of incorporation is weakly present but corresponds to the period in which the youth is thoroughly imbued in the beliefs and practices of pregnancy and childbirth and diminishes all social interaction toward the end of pregnancy. Incorporation is necessarily incomplete because pregnancy is a definitive biological process and cannot be a permanent state.

The social aspect of childbirth is a unique situation, a life crisis of personal and social significance. It is of fairly short duration

but the prospective mother hangs in a limbo between life and death and apart from customary social positions. Like an infant unable to perform the simplest functions, rendered helpless by the physical and social parameters of the crisis, she is removed from the society and placed in an institution especially equipped to manage weak and delicate persons. Childbirth is a short but intense event and is separated from the hierarchy of statuses and behavioral expectations prevailing in the community.

In pregnancy and more dramatically in childbirth the girl is dependent, helpless, held in suspense and dread only to be elevated to a higher status for having endured the process. Turner (1969:201) states that when liminality appears in rites of passage the neophyte is humbled precisely because he is to be structurally exalted at the end of the rites. Status elevation for females occurs some time after delivery in the post liminal phase. Incorporation into adulthood occurs only after she demonstrates to the satisfaction of adult women that the process of pregnancy and childbirth have had their proper effect. Humbled by the discomforts and sacrifices required by childbirth, women deserving of adult status assume full responsibility for the infant in relation to physical needs, and to the kin group.

With the pattern of rites of passage as a model, the process of pregnancy and childbirth are examined. Then, the final rite of passage which admits the female to adult status, that of acceptance into motherhood is analyzed. The discussion focuses on girls who deliver infants surviving the first year of life. Adult status is achieved through procreation. Although education, employment, religious endeavors and the care role can ultimately produce adult status without procreation they



are less frequently seen in Edge Crossing. Through such endeavors adulthood is achieved much later and the transitional phase between childhood and adulthood is terminated more gradually.

Among adolescents who infrequently utilize birth control, pregnancy is not an unanticipated outcome of courtship. When pregnancy occurs it is often met with ambivalence because various social relationships necessarily undergo alteration and produce disequilibrium requiring unfamiliar interactions. Girls perceive that pregnancy can strengthen, formalize and validate courtship bonds. Even though pregnancy may not be "planned" in the current usage of the term it is a fortuitous event with relatively predictable results.

Girls usually become pregnant in the middle or late teenage years after they have acquired a body of female lore relating to courtship, feminine behavior and sexuality. The first awareness of pregnancy usually marks interactional shifts in courtships, adult-adolescent interactions and peer group activities which become more obvious as the pregnancy develops. In the first trimester of pregnancy most girls divulge their condition to very few persons because these early months are uncertain ones. They are not positive that they are pregnant and have not become comfortable with the possibility. Cessation of menstruation is not regarded as a positive sign of pregnancy because they often have menstrual irregularities that include amenorrhea. Nausea, pica and "brightening" of the skin are considered early symptoms of pregnancy. Breast enlargement, usually occurring in pregnancy, is not seriously regarded because many girls are still experiencing developmental growth at their first conception. The physical signs of early pregnancy are often easy to disregard. Sometimes girls feeling ambivalent about

pregnancy pass the symptoms off and avoid serious consideration of the consequences until later.

When young women look back on their first pregnancy many of them recall that cessation of menstruation was a signal to them but that other symptoms were more important. Some girls "know" from the moment of conception that they are pregnant. One recalled that she got a "chill" after having sexual intercourse and a twitch in her eye later in the evening. The chill indicated that she was pregnant and the twitch in her eye was a sign of good luck. Some youths who "know" that they are pregnant minutes or hours after sexual relations say that they "just feel funny" in the region between the sternum and pubic bone and know that the feeling can mean only that they are pregnant.

While some girls are sure of pregnancy right from the start, others are unaware of their condition until they are told by someone else. Often it is through customary interactional sets that pregnancy is realized. Males have a special ability to detect pregnancy. It is sometimes a girl's sexual partner who tells her that she is pregnant. Because women "be more quarrelish" from the onset of pregnancy, some men know from a woman's attitude that she is pregnant. It is also said that a woman "feels different on the inside" during intercourse and men detect pregnancy in this way. Adult women in the household often keep a careful eye on girls despite the lack of verbal communication. When a girl experiences amenorrhea the adult asks, "How come I ain't seen nothing?" The youth responds, "You just ain't been paying attention, I been coming around." As time passes the facts inevitably become known, but girls are relatively successful in keeping pregnancy a secret until they are ready to cope with the alterations in social interactions it brings.

A youth's relations with her boyfriend necessarily undergo change as a result of pregnancy. For most it is the event creating a bond of common interest between them for life. The pregnancy and forthcoming child symbolize a union between them of greater significance than courtship offered. Procreation is a serious matter; it brings together not only the prospective parents but their descent groups as well.

It is difficult for girls to anticipate how males will respond to their pregnancy. Most males are said to want children and to feel "proud" when they know that they are the parent of an unborn child. Even so, the timing, their feeling for the expectant mother or other courtship and family relationships may cause the event to be less than warmly welcomed.

Clearly, both males and females are aware that pregnancy is a distinct possibility in courtship, but males often respond in what females describe as unexpected ways. Girls aim toward eliciting from the male acknowledgement of paternity and symbolic or tangible evidence of continuing interest in his child and thereby the mother. Girls normally approach the subject of pregnancy before it occurs and have some idea of how the male feels about her "having a baby for him." After conception girls often do not tell the prospective father that they are pregnant. Their behavior, including pica, appetite and mood changes are empirical evidence that eventually reveal to him that pregnancy has occurred. They may continue the relationship for three or four months while the male tells the girl that she is pregnant and she either denies or ignores his statements.

Even after the girl is sure that she is pregnant she may not openly admit to the prospective father that she is pregnant, but hints, remarks

on how she feels, and dodges his direct questions. The indirect approach to such matters is in consonance with the practice of keeping males in suspense.

When a girl is pregnant her status relative to all others is changed. Ideally, the prospective father becomes more solicitous of her. The usual reciprocity that flows between courting couples continues but the male increases his contribution because of "the baby." In early pregnancy both parties are cautious in requesting or providing further commitments. Females usually reduce or terminate other courtship relationships while they are adjusting to pregnancy and formalizing their relationships with him and his family. Interactions in her household affect the approach a girl makes to the prospective father. If girls are "dogged" too much at home they tend to increase the pressure on the father to "take care" of them, marry or form a separate household. On the other hand, if the prospective father is too reticent in assisting her in the expected ways, her family supports her more actively and verbalizes strong disapproval of the male who "messed her up." The interrelations between the two are reciprocal and the girl is influenced in her decisions in one by the interactions in the other. Youth tend to achieve a balance between the two but it is more often the girl's family that is primarily responsible for her support, especially during the first pregnancy. Many girls and adult women state that a girl is entitled to one pregnancy before marriage but that she had better marry before the second child is born or risk being "put out" of the house. When girls have a first child they are socially not adults but usually have assumed adult roles when they become pregnant a second time. The stress placed on having a male support them after the first child expresses the responsibility adult

women are expected to assume regarding their offspring. Despite adults' expectations of young women they do not usually insist that they leave home. The composition of household in the community indicates that few girls are "put out" even if they do not gain support of males after first pregnancies.

A closer examination of male-female relations during pregnancy clarifies why girls usually maintain strong ties with their families. Sometimes a girl is unsure who is the father of her unborn child, and certain problems ensue. It is considered foolish and slightly immoral for a girl to be uncertain about the paternity of her child who, in the future, shall need to know his kin so as not unwittingly to marry someone related to him. When the paternity of the unborn child is uncertain, the girl usually assigns a father to him; the male designated as father can accept or refute his involvement. It is said that a girl may be "liking one boy" and "going with" another. When she becomes pregnant she "puts it" on the one she likes and hopes he'll "do right by her." Often the assigned father disclaims the baby. In other cases, the male doesn't want to "settle down," or the youth has been unfaithful and he refuses to accept paternity even though he and everyone else "knows" the baby is his. On very rare occasions the girl refuses to divulge the identity of the father when he is married to a local resident or is related to her by blood or marriage. Pregnancy is one way that females gain adult status and achieve an identification with a descent group other than their own. These consequences are important enough that girls are willing to undergo the process even if there is no assurance that the male will accept paternity.

The response of males is more unpredictable than that of adult women who usually support and assist girls through their first experience in womanly endeavor. Adult women are verbally uncommunicative with girls about courtship but often make careful observation of their behavior, know when they are pregnant and behave as if they are very displeased about the event. In early pregnancy girls are subjected to leveling to a low status position and are separated from their former status. They are accused of being "messed up" and to have behaved disgracefully. They are indicted for having "gotten the baby in the streets" and of persistently "laying up under some man." They may have thought they were "smart" but they'll find out what all that "running" leads to when they have the baby and they'll surely "pay" for all that fun. The girl is said to be personally responsible for bringing an innocent soul into the world who could have "stayed in heaven" where he belonged. The financial worries and other problems children bring are paraded in front of the girl and the most dramatic example of how troublesome children are is personified in the pregnant condition of the girl. The tirades of adult women are frequent and merciless against girls suspected of being pregnant or who have recently been diagnosed as pregnant. Girls endure the abuse with downcast head as if properly ashamed of their actions and of the result.

The initial displeasure of adult women toward a girl's pregnancy is anticipated. If the adult continues to "dog" her more than a month or so she becomes anxious to persuade the prospective father to help her escape the situation. This is rarely necessary because after the girl has been made to feel her low status and insecure position the accusations subside.

Eventually the physical and emotional load the girl is carrying is acknowledged by adult women and they share with her their own experiences with pregnancy and childbirth. The support offered by adult women helps to "lighten the burden" she bears. She is relieved of some household tasks and permitted to sleep and rest as much as she needs. The sharing of experiences with women who have experienced pregnancy and childbirth draws the girl closer to them, helps her adjust to the process and prepares her for the childbirth experience. Remedies for common complaints of pregnancy, proper behavior and other knowledge are transmitted to her. Many of the beliefs and practices they learn during pregnancy have been documented by Murphree (1968) who worked in a north central Florida community but did not restrict her research to blacks.

Pregnancy demonstrates the power of the weak (Turner 1969) because in pregnancy they are simultaneously drawn into knowledge and behavior reserved for adults and separated from their former status. The growth and continuity of the kin group is dependent on procreation and the girl contributes to the strength of the group by procreation. After pregnancy occurs, the prospective father is measured not as a fanciful boyfriend but as a potential family member. He is permitted more familiarity with the girl at home and spends more time in interactions with family members.

The girl's mother has an interest in formalizing the relationship between the prospective mother and father but there is a strong reluctance by either party to act impulsively. While a few men deny paternity or refuse to support a child in some way, both males and females are reluctant to become legally bound in marriage.

Most females agree that girls should not be pushed into marriage or any permanent relationship if they are not ready or do not feel that they have found "the right man." It is better for a girl to have a child who is wholly dependent on her family than to get into a relationship with a man in which she is not happy. Loosely structured relationships in which the male acknowledges paternity and does "what he can" for the mother and her family seem to prevail. Often prospective parents do marry while the girl is pregnant but there is little familial pressure for them to do so.

During pregnancy the male usually financially and emotionally supports his girlfriend as well as possible. He is drawn more closely into her home and establishes reciprocal relationships with her kin. One dimension of his behavior by which his potential is measured is the amount of time he spends with the pregnant girl and the lengths to which he goes to attend to her desires and needs. Many prospective fathers pay the hospital and physician's fees connected with the birth. The baby often carries the surname of his father even though his parents aren't married. The father's behavior symbolizes his involvement in the procreative process and his claim to the offspring.

Girls often develop strong ties with the prospective father's female kin. In early pregnancy the paternal kin behave similarly to the girl's own kin. They deny their concern over the pregnancy and say that it's up to the girl and her mother to keep her "out of trouble." As the pregnancy progresses they demonstrate concern for her and are solicitous of her needs, share their pregnancy and childbirth experiences with her and ask how "their" unborn baby is doing.



The more intense interactions of the girl with adult female kin, the prospective father and his kin alter her interactions in the peer group. By the fifth or sixth month of pregnancy she withdraws from school and reduces even further her peer group interactions. The important business of learning feminine lore about pregnancy, altering courtship relationships and coping with the emotional and physical demands of pregnancy remove her from former entertainment activities. In addition she is separated from peers because she has gained an altered status. Former close friends think she is acting "grown" and "too smart" for them. The camaraderie of the peer group is never regained. Later, when other peers are also mothers, close friendships renew, but the sharing of activities, feelings and experiences is not as open and the common adult enemy has vanished.

Pregnancy involves several novel interactional sets that reflect the altered status of the pregnant girl. Introduction to the health care process during pregnancy usually occurs between the third and sixth month. Girls have little or no experience in the health care system before pregnancy. They are prepared for the event by women who describe the process or are told that they will find out what it is like soon enough. They are always left with the impression that no matter how disturbing the initial examination is, it is nothing in comparison to the labor experience.

Girls are usually accompanied to prenatal visits by an adult woman who knows the clinic or office procedure. The adult takes care of all contact with health personnel up to the entry of the girl into the examining room. The adult provides support and guidance for her in securing care and in coping with the system, but during the most anxiety

provoking part of the process she is left unsupported. The girl enters the examining room in the presence of strange medical personnel, is stripped of her clothing and offered a skimpy gown to cover her nakedness. She provides the answers to questions on the medical history with the meager information she has garnered about her own and her family's health. Then, she is directed to lay on a narrow, hard table while she is quizzed, palpated and examined visually and aurally. The pelvic exam, reserved for the end of the examination, is more threatening than the rest and it is often perceived as painful.

The girl endures the whole procedure with a minimum of comment and complaint. This is a moment in and out of time (Turner 1969), she is utterly separated from the normal social life, ground down to the lowest level and deprived of the normal attributes of her status. The anxiety generated is great but she emerges more confident than before. All had been revealed and seemingly nothing lost. The anxiety gives way to success and an off-handed attitude. In retrospect it was nothing in comparison to her expectations, having endured the process she is better equipped to cope with the trials and dangers that lie ahead in the path toward womanhood.

Girls become fairly well adjusted to the fact of pregnancy and the alternations in interactions it produces by the seventh month. Having withdrawn from school, they spend their days at home, engaging in housework, talking with women and courting. The expected behavior, practices and beliefs associated with pregnancy have become part of their knowledge. The pregnancy, obvious to all, is publically acknowledged and the courtship relationship is relatively stable. The prospective

father "sits with" the girl at home rather than engaging in normal courtship behavior for fear that dancing, drinking and excitement will harm the mother or the baby. Some youth express a desire to get out, dance, drink and have sexual relations toward the end of pregnancy but they are usually protected from these desires by solicitous females or the prospective father.

It is in the latter months of pregnancy that the suggestion of incorporation into the status of pregnancy is present. Youth spend most of their time resting, waiting and sleeping. Their interactions in all sets diminish and they await the completion of the process. The physiology of pregnancy with strain on the various bodily systems explains some of their lethargy but the time spent in quiet reflection is something more. Having heard the lore of pregnancy and childbirth from others, they are vaguely anxious about childbirth but it lies too far in the future to actively worry. The "fullness" they feel, backaches, constipation, leg cramps and swelling in the feet are problems to be treated and endured.

Incorporation into the status of pregnancy is never complete because the patient waiting gives way to anxious anticipation of the baby's birth. Relief from the physical burden and desire to know whether the baby is male or female and healthy or not contributes to restlessness near term. Girls are caught in a double bind, wanting to be relieved of pregnancy but dreading the ordeal of childbirth. Most of them are ready to be through with pregnancy when they begin labor.

Before proceeding with a discussion of childbirth, a summary of the pregnancy experience elucidates significant points. Pregnant girls are separated from peers and drawn into closer relationships with adult

women. Courtship relationships are altered, and the genitor acknowledges paternity and relates to the youth in socially defined ways appropriate to his role. Adjustments in the social field transpire during pregnancy. Girls weigh the relative advantages and stresses inherent in aligning with their families or with the boyfriends but are totally committed to neither. Girls may rely primarily on the resources of males or may be supported by their families and receive no support from the males. During the first pregnancy most youth prefer to be in close contact with adult women who transmit to them the lore of pregnancy and childbirth. In late pregnancy introspection and diminished interactions are marked. The desire to have the baby to hold is balanced by the fear of the childbirth experience.

## CHAPTER 14

### CHILDBIRTH -- A SECOND SUB-PHASE

The labor and delivery experience, second sub-phase in the rite of passage, differs in its social manifestations from pregnancy in many ways. The childbirth experience is of fairly short duration; socially it lasts a day or so and medically it is usually of shorter duration. Birth normally takes place in a health care institution separated physically and socially from the community. Childbirth is a crisis for all concerned and is perceived as an intense, critical experience.

The enactment of the rite of passage associated with labor and delivery is discussed below. Before girls are ready to "get down" in labor they are treated more kindly than during earlier months. They are frequently asked, "How you feeling, honey?" by adult women who closely observe their behavior and reactions to detect the onset of labor. Usually girls are not sure exactly what signs are going to herald the beginning of labor but know that most women say that they will know when it happens. Most women consider the best indicator of labor to be the frequency and "sharpness" of labor pains. Usually expectant females have "little nagers" for days or weeks before the birth but when a woman is "really in labor them pains be eating her up."

The intensity of pain in labor and the way women "bear with" their pains is one aspect of labor all pregnant girls have heard about repeatedly. Adults often relate to girls their own experiences with birth. Most women say that they hurt very badly during labor but were determined not to make a sound. A few admit that they screamed, hollered, squirmed around in bed and made "real fools" of themselves. The ideal behavior is to endure the "suffering" in silence and to pray to God for safe delivery. There is little that anyone else can do to relieve the pain of childbirth because it is a matter between them and God. In childbirth women are cast adrift from society and controlled by supernatural forces.

Girls responding to the mandate to communicate with God accept the "burden to bring forth fruit in pain" in a consistent fashion. They are very quiet about their expectations, the symptoms they experience, and about their own feelings. When contractions start they stoically endure them without comment and often do not report them to anyone because they may be told that they are not in labor. The onset of labor is usually recognized by other women who note behavioral changes in the girl, who may be up in the night to the bathroom or moodily changing position every few minutes. Adults question the girl to determine whether "it be her time." They want to know if she's "seen a sign" or the bloody mucous discharge that often occurs in early labor and whether her "water's broke" or amniotic sac has ruptured. Pains, sign and water are the three symptoms of labor most seriously considered by adult women. Of these the pains are the most important because they ultimately push the baby "out of his bed."

Girls are not expected to be responsible for detecting the onset of labor or for arrangements to get to the hospital. These are taken care of by adult women who may recruit a man to drive. In the process of birth the role of males is minimal; the passage of the girl from pregnancy to biological motherhood is in the hands of women who know the process and its distinctive patterns. When it is decided by two or more females that the girl is in labor, a car is secured and she is assisted into it. Word is sent to the prospective father and a small cluster of critical personnel deliver her to the hospital. The prospective mother, the passenger in the process, is totally relieved of ordinary responsibility, interacting with no one, totally introspective and coping with the involved physiological process taking place within her.

Socially separated from society she is transported to an institution which removes her physically from the normal spatial, temporal and interpersonal indicators of her status. The critical personnel accompany her to the door of the labor room where she is whisked through a series of procedures designed to cleanse her of the physical remnants of her former position. In the company of strangers, her clothes, hair curlers and jewelry are removed. An enema and perineal shave cleanse her of impurities in the area of focus for the coming birth.

The phase of separation is clearly marked, and the break from the former position is abrupt. The short rite of passage of childbirth is indelibly etched on her mind. She never returns to the status of the uninitiated. The girl, utterly alone, stripped totally of her possessions, endures periodic contractions demanding her concentration. She is placed in bed in a small, sparsely furnished room and forbidden to get up; she calls on inner reserves of strength to sustain her.

After the initial, dramatic separation she is permitted minimal contact with social ties, though only one visitor. The visitor must be consistent because additional personnel increase the risk of contaminating the purified, ritual passenger with worldly pollutants. The visitor, her only link with previous life, and she have limited interactions because the contractions and physical process of labor require nearly all her attention.

The visitor, leaving the labor room regularly, reports to the critical personnel who wait outside the door. The number of waiting persons varies but the nucleus is those most closely involved in the girl's passage into adulthood. Most of them are female and include the mother, grandmother, sister and prospective father. Those not physically in attendance are drawn into the process when they are telephoned and given reports on the girl's condition.

The analysis of the interactions and behaviors of personnel in the transitional phase reveal three distinct sets of persona. The focus of the ceremony is on the girl who interacts minimally with the other two. The critical personnel who wait in the wings represent the skeletal structure of society awaiting the return of the ritual passenger in an altered status. The medical personnel are ritual specialists who supervise the birth process and assume total responsibility for her safe passage. Their interactions and expectations explicate their significance to the process.

The girl, relinquished by her family and friends, is socially in a limbo between life and death. Devoid of status she endures the suffering she has known would be hers in the attainment of motherhood. She is neutral, dependent, unable to undertake the simplest tasks and



barely in control of her physical activities. She is immediately dependent on unusually powerful strangers who perform complicated procedures and have medications mitigating her physical and emotional distress. In the limbo between life and death the girl is uncertain what is to be her fate. If continuing in pain is all there is to life she would rather be dead, yet death is more dreadful still. The paradox of her predicament results in her joining the forces controlling her destiny. As the physical discomforts of labor increase she turns to the medical personnel and to God for relief and solace. Her cry, "Oh, nurse, help me, doctor, help me, Jesus, help me, Oh God, help me, please help me," are like a litany, each incantation pleading a higher power to hear her case and have mercy. The drama acted out between the girl, medical personnel and supernatural powers is divorced completely from the ongoing social life.

The critical personnel outside the labor room wait, worry and pray for a safe delivery or if that is denied, her safe passage into the world beyond. Having only the power of prayer to influence the situation, they commit her to the hands of experts and to God. They sieze every shred of information about the girl and examine it from every angle to evaluate its meaning. The wait, which may be an hour or so, seems endless. They too are drawn into limbo, humbled by the proportions of the crisis and immobilized until it is resolved.

Eventually the girl reaches the limit of her endurance. Fatigued by the force of the contractions and irritated by the length of the labor, she is discouraged because she may never escape the situation to live once more. She pleads for help and insists that she can do no more. She complains, "Somebody do something," surrendering any remnant of self

control. Agitation, discomfort and loss of control noted by medical personnel are expected toward the end of the first stage of labor. The passenger, completely conquered by her physiology, has lost the measure of control she grasped so dearly. Simple instructions receive the response, "I can't do it." Medical personnel try to renew her courage, assist her with every move, demand nothing from her and insist that she is enduring the worst, that she will "feel better soon." Unbelieving, the girl is sure she will never feel better and that the end is near.

Some women do experience some relief of discomfort as the cervix becomes fully dilated and the baby presses outward. The pushing response is a natural one but a medical professional usually stays with the girl, encourages and supports her. Often anxiety and exhaustion allow no relief after full dilatation and she continues to feel out of control until the birth.

The procedure of moving into the delivery room, positioning on the table, the examinations and further cleansings contribute to further confusion and anxiety. The most frustrating and difficult part of labor lasts an hour or two but during this period the girl experiences the reality of possible death.

The moment of birth brings relief to her and the medical personnel responsible for her. She experiences immediate relief of discomfort and much of her anxiety. Within a minute or two she asks, "What is it?" and is told "It's a boy," or "It's a girl," "Do you want to see?" The baby is held up, head down, cord cut and clamped, for visual examination. She smiles and is visibly pleased.

The girl, medical personnel and supernatural forces have cooperated, she lives again and is proud of her accomplishment. She remains fully separated from the social world, her accomplishment unannounced to the persons who await news of her safe passage. Within half an hour after the crisis is past, the baby is transported to the nursery via the waiting room. Family and friends learn that the crisis is past by seeing the baby. The meeting is a brief one because medical personnel rarely linger long among contaminated outsiders. The critical personnel are pleased that their prayers have been answered and that the girl will be returned to them, elevated in status by her ordeal and successful completion of the test.

An hour or so after delivery the girl is transported to the recovery room, her condition still monitored by medical personnel. The visitor, expelled from the area during the delivery, is invited to return and they talk in subdued tones. She smiles and says that she is feeling fine. The visitor comments on the baby and asks whether she needs anything, but doesn't linger because medical personnel insist that the girl must rest. The visitor is satisfied that she is out of danger.

The interaction between visitor and the mother is the initial sequence in the phase of incorporation into a new status. The incorporation phase occurs gradually as the physical condition of the mother approaches normal and she is integrated into the social behavior expected of mothers.

The interactions of mother and infant discussed in Chapter 8 are not repeated here; the focus is on the articulation of space, time and social realities of parturient women. The girl, considered out of danger

when the delivery is past, is still in a delicate condition. Remaining in the hospital for two or three days after delivery she submits to the demands of the institution. Most of her time is spent in bed engaging in the procedures and routines required by medical personnel. She is presented with three meals each day symbolically returning her to one aspect of normalcy. Regular interactions with her infant scheduled between other routines periodically remind her of the fruits of her efforts. She is permitted visitors at very restricted intervals so that her needs for rest, nutrition and therapy are not interrupted by outside stimuli. The girl begins to realize the magnitude of her accomplishment by the behavior of the medical personnel and visitors. She has never received so much attention or been catered to so extensively.

Usually girls are presented with another indication of incorporation into adult society before release from the hospital. Medical personnel discuss with them their plans for future pregnancies and offer to provide them with the knowledge and techniques to accurately predict their next child. The panorama of techniques are displayed and girls are permitted to choose, with minimal guidance, the most attractive alternative. Most of them prefer the contraceptive pill and are awarded a three months supply to take home with them.

Most girls look back on their post partum hospitalization experience as a "good time" with good food, "laying up in the bed" with few demands on them. They develop a longing to return to social life. The critical personnel who delivered them to the institution return to recover them and the new addition to the descent group from it. The identical persons may not all return but appointed representatives are among them. The mother, her worldly possessions, and the baby are released by the institution and returned to society.

The girl returns home triumphant, everyone is impressed with the baby. She is required to remain in the house, keep warm and wear shoes so that she does not get chilled and become sick. The baby is her major responsibility and she is forbidden to "stir around too much" for a week or so because it is thought to cause "female trouble," excessive post partum bleeding and later loss of muscle tone. Other knowledge and lore associated with the puerperium is transmitted to her during this period. Engorgement of the breasts with milk are treated with applications of camphorated oil and expressing the milk. Fish are avoided as they are during all periods of vaginal bleeding. A diet and medications encouraging regular evacuation of the bowels is administered. The girl is permitted to rest as much as necessary to regain her strength.

The childbirth process drains the youth physically and socially but she is restored to society in a different status. The baby and mother are as one. The baby, important in the continuation of society and in joining of two kin groups is the substance of her elevated position. The status elevation occurring when girls become mothers is dramatic and unusual after the humility of early pregnancy and childbirth. The father, visiting baby and mother as often as possible, sits with her and proudly holds the baby. The importance of the baby is demonstrated by the gifts, visits and comments visitors make (see Chapter 8).

After a week or so girls are not considered so delicate and are permitted outdoors. They begin to assume some household responsibility and permit the baby to be held and fed by others. It is after the youth has regained her strength and is permitted to leave the house that she becomes involved in the final rite of passage between childhood and

adulthood. This rite enacted wholly within the social context, is less dramatic than that of childbirth but is ultimately more significant. It permits the girl to choose between adulthood demonstrated by motherhood or a return to adolescent behaviors.

Most girls choose the role of motherhood and adult roles without equivocation. The importance of the baby to the descent group is demonstrated by the vigilance of adult women. They do not permit the infant to be neglected. If the biological mother doesn't conform to their expectations she is relieved of the responsibility for her baby. All girls are observed for behaviors indicating a lack of interest in the baby and omissions brought to their attentions. The acceptance or rejection of motherhood is determined by the biological mother and women in the descent group. This process constitutes the final sub-phase into the rite of passage between childhood and adulthood. In most cases the girl is sufficiently conscientious that her incorporation into adulthood is not seriously questioned and the final sub-phase is weakly marked. In some instances, the girl is relieved of the mothering role; this situation is discussed in Chapter 15.

## CHAPTER 15

### ASSUMING THE ROLE OF MOTHER -- A THIRD SUB-PHASE

The social process of pregnancy and childbirth, discussed in Chapters 13 and 14, reveal dramatic alterations in social interactions. In the third sub-phase of the rite of passage in adolescence the alterations in interactions and status change are less clearly marked but reflect the meaning of womanly role in family and community.

Young mothers, after childbirth, are returned to the family and community in structural positions differing from those of adolescence. As mothers their contributions to the descent group is recognized and they are expected to take a more active role in the descent group. It is through their behavior with the infant, females in the group and in courtship that the role of mother is validated or rejected. Descent group heads and older female relatives ultimately determine whether young mothers are admitted to adult status. Those accepting motherhood receive direction from their mothers and older women, share housekeeping responsibilities and maintain relationships with the babies' relatives. The relationships and behaviors of young women are discussed first and then the events leading up to a change in the mothering figure is presented.

The close physical and emotional relationship of the mother and infant, discussed in Chapter 8, is one aspect of motherhood. The infant

sleeps with the mother, she feeds him, keeps him clean and satisfied and permits him to relate with others in the household. The consistent attention to the baby's needs are expected of mothers and necessary for their acceptance by older women as an adult.

Older women are generous with advice about baby care and young mothers are expected to listen to and heed it. Some limits are placed on the amount of time young mothers spend away from the home because older women believe that mothers should demonstrate their interest in their infants by attending to them consistently. The advice of older women and the requirements they place on young mothers reveals that they are leaders in the group. They serve to guide young women in motherhood and are responsible for the calibre of child care in the group. Young women acknowledge their position and care for their infants in ways acceptable to mature women. Although older women and young ones are not equals, there is reduction in the hostility that was present during adolescence.

Older women remain in control of household affairs but young women participate more actively in the decision-making and sharing of responsibility. Young women share in the care of other children in the household, keep house and talk freely with women about feminine topics taboo in adolescence. Often, the sharing of household duties involves the young mother's staying at home with sisters' or mother's children while they work. Although these responsibilities are a part of adolescent roles, after motherhood they take on new meaning. The welfare of the mother and her child is tied more closely to the well being of the group. Young mothers assist other women with their children so they can receive child care services when they are out. Among women, discussion of child



care and sharing of responsibility tend to replace peer group activities of adolescence.

Young mothers maintain ties with the baby's father's relatives to establish his claim to that descent group. Her position in the paternal descent group is through the baby and is expressed in attention shown the baby by his relatives. The mother receives praise for the baby's growth, good looks, appetite and pleasant disposition. The relationship with the baby's father's descent group parallels their position in their own group except that the ties are less binding. Young women interact with the baby's father's sisters. They share baby stories and occasionally child care. Babies are encouraged to go to the arms of "Auntie" and are permitted to crawl and play with their cousins.

Young women relate to the baby's paternal grandmother as the descent group head. They receive favors and gifts from her and take care that the baby is not removed from their own group. For example, Rose, returning to school after having her baby needed to find a baby sitter. Her grandmother took care of a sick brother during the day and her mother worked. Rose maintained a relationship with the paternal grandmother who lived in University Town and she offered to take the baby for Rose until she finished school. Both Rose and her grandmother were polite but firm in refusing the offer. Rose said she wanted to be near her baby because he was her responsibility. Rose's grandmother didn't want the baby "under" another woman when she could not be sure how he was being treated. Their responses reflect the importance of the baby to Rose in attaining adulthood and to the descent group. Rose needed to be in daily contact with the baby to validate her womanly status and her grandmother did not want to risk losing the baby from the group. They

did want to assure for the baby's support and identification with the paternal descent group. When the paternal grandmother wanted to see the baby Rose took the baby to her house for the day and she and the baby sometimes spent the weekend with the baby's grandmother. Rose did not normally permit the baby to remain in the paternal household unless she was present.

Most young mothers recognize the responsibility they have to the descent group and to the baby. The role of mother requires many adaptations in their behavior including courtship activities. Young women establish a permanent bond with the baby's descent group and usually maintain a relationship with the father too. Although the mother and father have other courtship interests, their involvement with one another through the baby remains. The sexual component of the relationship can be restored whenever it is mutually agreeable. Women who have children fathered by different men increase the number of courting pairs they can maintain. Although the potential for courtship is increased by motherhood, young women have to consider their children and the expectations of older women. The need for child care when they court draws related young women together. The pattern of young women courting after they are mothers is one point of contention with older women who acknowledge the need of younger ones to go out but require they do not court as extensively as in adolescence.

When girls are more interested in courtship, employment or education than they are in their children and descent group they often relinquish their claim on their children and return to adolescent roles. It is usually courtship interests that lead to children gaining new mothering figures. For example, Julia, 17 years of age, had a six month old baby

when she went to Miami, Florida, without the baby, to stay with her aunt for a week. While there she started courting a man and didn't return to Edge Crossing for three weeks. When she came back she stated that she and the baby were going back to Miami to stay. This plan was vetoed by her mother and grandmother who said that she was not going to drag the baby "all over" (in bus stations, out at night and around strangers) because it would make him sick. If she wanted "to be all the time in the streets" and had to get "the roaming out of her blood" that was one thing, but she was not going to endanger the baby. Julia protested, saying that the baby was hers, she "birthed him," took care of him and she would do as she pleased. Her mother countered her statements by saying that if Julia took the baby with her she would get "the man" (the police) to come get her and the baby. Julia did not think her mother would really do that but the threat was sufficient. She went to Miami alone and spent about half her time there for three months. While she was gone there was considerable talk about her behavior. Her grandmother said that Nellie, Julia's older sister, was more like a mother to the baby than Julia and that if Julia did not care "no more about the baby than that" (going off to court) she should not be a mother. Eventually she returned to the baby and reestablished her claim to motherhood.

In this case there was no woman immediately available who wanted the baby for her own, but if Nellie or her mother or grandmother had wanted to become mother of the baby Julia probably would have been encouraged to give the baby to her.

It is not unusual for young women to "give" their babies to other mothering figures at the urging of older women. Usually "new" mothering figures are related to the baby and are often his grandmother or greatgrandmother. Women other than those in direct ascending lines who are given

a baby have few or no children or have grown offspring (an example of this was mentioned in Chapter 7). Women who want to receive a baby "beg" the mother and older females in the household for the baby. They buy clothes and food for him, visit him, inquire about him and demonstrate their love and ability to care for him. When the biological mother is not behaving in ways acceptable to adult women, they eventually support the desires of the "new" mother pointing out the advantages of the arrangement to the biological mother. Young mothers are reluctant to relinquish their children but older women persuade them to do so when another woman demonstrates love, affection and the financial ability to provide for him. When the baby is given away it permits the biological mother to return to courtship and other activities of adolescence. Mothers rarely lose contact with their children even when they leave the community.

One of the reasons that young mothers release their children is that they are emotionally involved with a man but estranged from him. They leave the community to forget him and are unable to take the baby along. For example, Gwen, 18 years of age, would not marry her boyfriend when she became pregnant or after the birth of her daughter. He pleaded with her to marry and was capable of supporting her. Gwen enjoyed the attention he showered on her and her baby but she had "turned against him" after becoming pregnant. Although she was "crazy" about him she "wouldn't have nothing to do with him" (sexually). Finally when the baby was four months of age he moved in with a girl friend about one-fourth mile from her mother's house. Gwen was "so outdone" that she wanted to get away from Edge Crossing and planned to live in a south Florida city with a cousin and work. Her mother persuaded Gwen to "give" the baby to

her before she left. Gwen comes home to see the child, now two years of age, every month or so but her mother takes care of the child, buys her clothing and the child calls her "Mama," and her biological mother, "Gwen."

Giving one's child to a mother or grandmother is not as final or drastic as giving a baby to another relative but the results are the same. Instead of taking an active role in descent group matters, the girl is returned to the activities of adolescence. The rite of passage of adolescence does not end abruptly because the acceptance or rejection of motherhood is a gradual process. The facility with which children change residence in later childhood is an extension of the process described here but when children change residence in later life the claim of the biological mother on adult status is not questioned.

The tendency of descent group heads to hold children in the group allows girls and young women freedom to court and to live beyond Edge Crossing for extended periods without having adult responsibilities in the descent group. Girls forfeit the status of motherhood and give their babies to other mothering figures to regain the freedom of adolescence. Most young women enthusiastically accept motherhood and the contingent descent group responsibility. The acceptance of motherhood is the first step toward becoming the head of the descent group and a household of their own.

## CHAPTER 16

### PART III CONCLUSIONS

The social maturation of girls from childhood until incorporation into adulthood is examined in Part III. Girls move from the play groups into positions of ambiguous status as they participate in courtship and peer group activities. Girls' activities in peer groups and in shops accentuate community as "fellowship" or communication among equals, distinct from the usual hierarchical arrangements in family and community. The responsibilities of girls in housekeeping and child care retain their identities in the family but their positions are weak because they are supervised by mature women with whom they have strained relationships.

Girls constrained by adults find release in peer groups and courtship. They share feelings and experiences with other girls and establish pair bonds with males setting them apart from household obligations. In courtship girls gain financial support, have pleasurable sexual experiences and are loathe to be attached to only one male. They maintain simultaneous and serial courtship pairs achieving independence of home and of any one male. In courtship they employ various strategies to achieve bonds distinct from the family and communicate with peers rather than adult women. Vacillating between identification with family and courtship pairs, their transitional status is clear.

Eventually, their position gains definition when they become pregnant. They reduce the number of courtship pairs and establish bonds with a male and his descent group but these bonds do not prove to be as durable as those with their own descent group. During pregnancy they become separated from extensive courtship, reduce peer group activities and align with adult women who instruct them in the lore of pregnancy and birth. Courtship is the stuff of adolescence and of liminal status, but pregnancy is an event of womanhood offering elevated social position.

Adolescence and pregnancy follow the schema of rites of passage (van Gennep 1960) but in childbirth the process is most dramatically revealed. The girls, removed from the community and family are placed in the hands of specialists who coach and assist them through the process. Childbirth, an event linked with death, is a shocking and frightening experience, but following it girls experience a dramatic reversal in status. The humiliation and fear accompanying childbirth gives way to status elevation in motherhood. The social strength of adolescent girls is expressed through their contribution to the continuation of the descent group. The role of adult women in supervising household and descent group affairs is strengthened through the addition of members; it is weakened if there are no children.

The act of birth provides members to the descent group; the importance of the act is illustrated by the mother's altered status. When girls do not assume the role of mother, the descent group is equipped to support the children and provide mothers for them. Girls may choose to be separated from their child and reenter the liminal activities of courtship and peer group abandoned during pregnancy. Such an event occurs over several months and enacts for the third time the schema of rites of passage in adolescence. The return to adolescence forfeits the

girl's claim to womanhood and reflects the seriousness of motherhood in the community.

The status of motherhood is important throughout the kinship system and in other community institutions. Women do not admit to womanly status unworthy girls. Their positions as supervisors of child care and household permit them to determine whether girls behave in the home, courtship and toward their children responsibly. They exert social control over mothers, threatening to remove the children from their care and thereby reduce their status. The strong position of older women in the household and in child care activities, discussed in Part II, are clarified by their control over infants born into the descent group and over their mothers.

Children born into descent groups are never left without mothering figures because the sharing of maternal role assures that one or more women will take them as their own. The flexibility in descent groups and household, discussed in Part II, functions to provide for all progeny in a given group. Girls who accept motherhood and the authority of older women support the social hierarchy in the kinship system and community. They ultimately become women who supervise their own children and accrue status based on the descent group they lead.

In adolescence girls are permitted latitude in their behavior. They are neither forced to marry or accept responsibility for their children. Mature women assure continued descent group membership and support for girls and their children. The emphasis on individualism and emotional expression seen in childhood, courtship, ritual activities and household patterns are also given expression in rites of passage of adolescence and the three sub-phases including pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood.



## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The modified community study approach utilized in this presentation permits the articulation of the material on adolescent maturation with the social, structural and ethnographic features of the community. Community is viewed as having two sexes and three generations organized around spatial, temporal regularities of social life. Within the community one of the primary organizing principles is that of the division of labor between the sexes. Distinctions based on sex are seen in the use of space, women identified with home and males with community roles. The sexual segregation found in day to day life is redefined in ritual where males and females are brought together. Religious ritual, tied to the calendrical cycles and into communication patterns between communities brings all personnel in the community together to express their unity. In all community rituals, including ball games, shop activities and religion, the dominant role of males are expressed. Male and public behavior of blacks has been studied more extensively than other areas and some of the themes in the research results are seen here. The verbal facility of males, the importance of male gathering points beyond the home, music, dance and games are seen in Abrahams (1964; 1970), Hannerz (1969), Haralambos (1970), Kochman (1970) and Liebow (1967).

In homes and in kinship there is a tendency for females to maintain strong positions. The kinship system, allowing land title and descent

group membership through females gives formal expression to the primacy of females in householding and child care. The relatively strong position of women in family and household are presented in other studies of New World blacks (Gonzalez 1969; Smith 1956). Earlier studies of blacks in the rural south also indicate that women have had an active role within the household and in childrearing (Johnson 1941; Powdermaker 1939). This research indicates that there is an ambilateral optative descent system in the community. Whether such a model fits other New World black populations is a question that may be answered by further research.

The structure of the kinship system permits an analysis of community and maturation. Descent groups and households permit children to be born and reared in a loosely organized household and to form relationships with kinsmen of various ages. The segregation of similarly aged persons within the kinship structure encourages strong bonds between siblings and cousins. The importance of the play group to youngsters, described here, is also discussed by Young (1970) who studied childhood in a small Georgia town. Children know a number of male and female adults from whom they learn expected forms of behavior. Sharing of household function contributes to the flexibility of daily routine and to the self-reliance and independence of children. Although the system is flexible, there is structure. Children are conscious of their kin linkages and have affectional ties to many of them.

In the maturational process, children move beyond kinship relationships into community (expressing in another way spatial and temporal rhythms). Girls involved in courtship and peer groups have strained relationships with adult kin, who tend to protect them from the realities

of the heterosexual world. Community, viewed through adolescent behavior, is not so much a hierarchy of social positions, as *communitas* or fellowship. Girls engage in activities in shops where an egalitarian atmosphere prevails and spin out into courting pairs. Shops and courtship are something apart from the normal social forms around which community revolves. Kin ties are not lost in adolescence but loosened to accommodate expanded social role.

Adolescence is seen as a rite of passage in which girls are separated from childhood attachments and permitted to explore more mature behaviors. Adolescent behavior is necessarily a period of testing and experimentation because it precedes the adult roles in the social structure. In *Edge Crossing* girls are groomed more consistently for the maternal role than any other. In childhood they gain self-reliance and self-assurance in female endeavor. They are comfortable with sexuality and their capacity to be mothers in early adolescence. The natural culmination of femininity found in motherhood is not an unexpected result of courtship. Although girls are not taught the process of pregnancy and childbirth they are considered a natural consequence of maturation. Girls' lack of knowledge and apprehension in pregnancy serves to make the elevated status of motherhood more dramatic. The rites of passage in adolescence, pregnancy and childbirth, serving to humiliate and deprive girls of social status illustrates the ritual power of the weak (Turner 1969). Motherhood ties girls back into the social structure in an elevated status. It provides for them the basic elements necessary to become leaders in family and community in later years.

In *Edge Crossing* womanhood is achieved through procreation more frequently than in any other way. This research questions whether other

avenues of achievement by education or employment will become more important in expressing adulthood. At this time occupational and educational opportunities are fairly restricted, both by the wider society and by socialization in the home and community. Changes occurring in the social expression of adulthood may be a topic for future inquiry.

Presently, the adolescent experience draws girls from the kinship structure, permits them liberty and experience before returning them to structure as adults. Van Gennep's (1960) model permits an analysis of the social process of adolescent female maturation involving pregnancy and childbirth. There are no other studies of adolescent maturation in which van Gennep's schema is used so comparisons are impossible. This research indicates that social process in rites of passage effectively prepares girls for the role of motherhood. One popular publication (Guffy 1972) captures the essence of female sexuality and motherhood for a black woman in the United States although the background is neither southern nor rural. Guffy reveals, in part, the marriage system, another important consideration in this research.

The patterns associated with adolescent courtship which extend through adulthood reflect that marriage is in itself of little importance to women in Edge Crossing. The significant aspects of marriage are financial support, sexual gratification and children. Courting relationships provide the basis for male-female interactions. Most men and women do eventually marry, but often not until children are born and then courtship behaviors do not usually cease. Courtship relationships are validated by births; the kinship system and household members provide support and structure for children in their early years.

The highly developed courtship pattern, emphasizing mutual attractiveness and pleasure is an expression of the fundamental importance of

sexuality. In Edge Crossing adolescent sexuality is acceptable and is expressed in courtship. The human need for sexual expression has long been accepted as basic to human society and is, in fact, necessary for its continuation. This research reveals that the matter of fact and relaxed attitude toward sexuality in the community contributes to the independence of women in forming courtship pairs. Active sexuality coexists with maternal roles to promote the continuation of the kinship system and community institutions.

Motherhood, in adolescence, validates adult status. In adulthood, children provide women with the potential to lead descent groups, to serve as a node for redistribution of resources and to guide younger members of the descent groups. Motherhood is an important maturational event and, in maturity, provides women with elevated status in the descent group. The value of motherhood is expressed in the kinship system and in community.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### THE PEOPLE AND I

Anthropologists emphasize the synthesis and lucid presentation of field research material after it is organized by the researcher. There is a heavy reliance on the integrity and honesty of the researcher because field notes are not readily available to the reader and structured research instruments are not ordinarily employed. The reader legitimately questions whether the researcher discerned reality and communicated it in his final report. The purpose of this appendix is to clarify the research process and provide the reader with the methods of data collection used. The development of the research problem, the techniques used to gain access to informants, personal adaptation to the field situation and the methods used in data collection and storage are discussed.

Interest in the major themes of this research, blacks, females, maturation and reproduction, are long standing interests of mine dating back to my initiation into the medical subculture in 1963. When I entered graduate school in anthropology in 1969 I was interested in birth control, reproduction and the impact of maternal infant health services. I developed a research design that permitted exploration of several unanswered questions about female maturational crises, childbearing, the importance of social support during life crises and how these changed through time. I knew that there were lay midwives practicing in Florida.

and thought that a comparison of lay midwives and medical personnel in the care and treatment of childbearing women would be of value. My plan was to discover the changes in beliefs and practices that accompanied the use of midwives or medical personnel and explore the behavior of young women surrounding reproduction. In the proposal I stressed the behavior of midwives and childbearing experiences rather than male-female interaction sets because I thought it would be highly unlikely for young women to discuss their intimate behaviors and relationships with me. In developing the proposal I learned that little is published about the social aspects of childbearing, black females or southern blacks as a subcultural group. Few models or hypotheses were available to organize my thoughts. The situation was ideal for an exploratory, holistic study to produce formulations about female behavior.

The first contact I made relating to the research was in July, 1971, when I accompanied the supervisor for lay midwives in Florida to a meeting for midwives in a central Florida county. Later the county health department was of assistance in identifying the midwives in the area in which I wanted to work. After the research proposal was approved I had several interviews with officials whose organizations provided services to the community I had chosen to study. The community was described as among the poorest, roughest, less advanced areas in the county.

Knowing the opinions and attitudes of officials about the community made me ill at ease. I had read numerous volumes available in the popular press about blacks and by blacks (Jones 1961; Malcolm X 1964; Brown 1965; Carmichael and Hamilton 1967; Cleaver 1968; Wright 1940; Grier and Cobbs 1968). The latent and overt hostility blacks are



reported to have toward all whites had an impact on me. I feared that I would represent all the ills of white society and that I would fail to accomplish the research and experience total rejection. Success equalled information from informants and understanding of it. It seemed to be an immense undertaking and I had almost no experience working in black communities in any capacity. This may have worked to my advantage in the end.

After selecting the community I drove through it a couple of times and didn't see any avenue of access. When the public health nurse offered to take me to a clinic she held there I went with her hoping to identify a point of entry. I was anxious to disassociate myself with agencies outside the community so that I would be seen as an independent operator, making my own mistakes and relatively free of the reputation of other agencies.

The clinic was held at the old school building and I immediately saw the Headstart teachers and class. This seemed like a fortuitous situation because the teachers were pleased to have volunteers in the classroom. I thought that I would find the pupils' mothers through Headstart and that would get me to the heart of the research fairly quickly. Headstart involvement did not lead me directly to the students' mothers but it was helpful in other ways. I learned Headstart routines, the childrens' names, to understand the language and met some community members. The Headstart cook was a generous woman with many visitors. When the students napped I went to the kitchen and talked with her or listened when she had visitors.

Early in the research I had no access to people in their homes. I was extremely reluctant to go from house to house in an attempt to meet

people because that is the approach of white outsiders, bill collectors and nuisances. I bided my time and met people through the school, senior citizens organization and later church.

The process seemed very slow. I had to meet people, talk to them long enough to let them know what I was doing, ask them if they would consider helping me. Then I would ask if we could meet again and await an invitation to their home. If they were willing to participate they would tell me how to get to their house or I would give them a ride home.

I felt an uncontrollable urge to let everyone with whom I talked know that the information I gathered from them and in the community was going to be used in a paper that I would write later and that whatever they said to me would be kept confidential. The disclosure of purpose seemed like an imposition from the external superstructure that I was obligated to honor at the beginning of the research when I was uncertain about the most understandable way to present it. They knew from the start they were not going to tell me anything that was a secret, or as they said, would do anyone any "harm." My writing about what I learned was confusing to them (even after they understood what I said) because they did not see anything in their lives or in the community that was worth writing about or reading about either. They did not see how I would write about the community and not use individuals' names.

I realized that communication problems probably impeded their understanding of what I meant. I repeated the purpose, asked their permission to participate and explained that I did not want them to feel obligated to help me if they weren't sure about it several times to each informant during the early months of the research. It was easier to transpose the concepts of purpose, confidentiality and written report into understandable

forms after I knew the language. I felt obligated to reiterate these things until I felt sure they were understood. When I obtained signed consents I described the way I would write to protect confidences and the kinds of things I would probably be writing.

The focus on change through time was retained through the early months of the research. I found older women easier to meet, more willing to participate, at home more often and more open about the community, its history and female behavior. I had difficulty keeping names linked to faces and the relationships between persons and households straight. Eliciting genealogies from older women added to my knowledge about family, community, household relationships, personal names and generational separations. I went back through genealogical material on several occasions and with persons of different ages and found new relationships and individuals each time.

The research continued to go more smoothly with each passing month but during the first four months I was struck by several things. My sensitivity to being out of place was agonizing. I developed frequent midday headaches which fed into my almost overwhelming desire to physically flee from situations in which I was uncomfortable. The people talked much slower than I did and were extremely indirect. It was patently clear that no one, especially I, would ever find out anything about a person or the community unless the informant felt that it was safe information or that I was a safe person to talk to irrespective of their willingness to help me in general. I found that asking about institutional arrangements, religion, school, historical events and about dead people (midwives, for example) produced more information than did asking about living persons and recent happenings. I learned

to be quiet and to listen until the speaker was completely finished with a sequence before interrupting or questioning.

Eventually I got to know various persons, could understand the language with ease, learned to be comfortable with silence and could relate to our commonalities (child care, home, cooking, gardening, etc.). Everything became easier when I knew a variety of females and could relate to them in ways that were appropriate to their age and status.

I never did meet everyone who lives in the community. Males were a category of persons with whom I had minimal contact. At the beginning of the field work I assumed that involvements with males might produce jealousy and would make my purpose questioned since I was doing female oriented research. Later, it became clear that contacts with males could be time consuming, unproductive in terms of the research and threatening to females. Generally, men and women assume that any male-female relationship has a sexual purpose. Several of my informants related to me instances of males who had approached them to "talk to" me for them. They responded that I was married and had children and that it was no use to "bother" with me. When they related the instances to me we laughed and joked about "how men be." When I went to dances or shops with younger friends I wasn't protected as well by the third party system, although I never went to them alone. I had to rely on my own resources to maintain social distance from interested males. At first I was unbelievably inept and anxious. Drawing from the behavior of other females, I managed to communicate that I was visiting but not available because I was married. I suppose that my posture of confusion communicated by lack of availability rather than the verbal content.

Now that the field research is completed I feel a little more comfortable talking with males but am still pretty clumsy when responding to invitations for intimate involvements. Recently, I was in a store talking to the proprietress when she was not busy helping customers. While she was working I was responding to a man beside me who wanted to take a drive in my husband's car (it is a "sporty" car) and who wanted some of the vodka he said was under the car seat. I was busy responding to his approach when another man came up behind me and whispered in my ear, "You going to turn me on sometime, Baby?" I was at a loss for words and said, "I'm all tied up right now." As the conversation continued I was confused but not as anxious as I had been on other occasions. It would be fair to say that I have not mastered the repartee that is necessary to interact with males on a personal but uninvolved basis.

I felt that my approach to each person in the community should be open friendliness and that I should assume that everyone had a very delicate ego. I am sure that I was kidded or misled on occasion. Perhaps the behavior of males was meant to be something other than my interpretation of it but I could not afford to be rude or unkind to them. I feel that if informants are given sufficient time they eventually reveal a fairly accurate picture of self.

One of the most rewarding relationships I had was with the licensed lay midwife. We became very friendly despite our age differential and I taped hours of her descriptions of experiences and her ideas. Eventually she and I traveled around visiting old friends and former clients of hers which gave me insight into the networks which bind communities together. The information she gave me was often used as a

basis for gathering data from other informants in the community. Later, when I talked with other midwives on tape in the community and beyond I was able to direct the conversations so that I covered similar topics with them in a shorter period of time.

Reciprocity of various sorts seemed to validate the relationships that formed. I had a collard green patch that produced prolifically and I took sacks filled with greens to informants who did not have greens in their garden. I was often given fish and peas that were saved for me. Although there was not a direct relationship between the giving and receiving it did tend to enhance the bonds between us.

Younger women revealed their personal lives to me and asked me questions about myself and white women in general. I revealed my personal and sexual behavior, my knowledge of white women and men to them more freely than I ordinarily do among other friends.

Frequently, once a week or more, I took between three and ten women and children into one of the towns to "trade" or attend to other business. On one occasion I had three adult women, eight children, seven bags of groceries, an overstuffed chair, a coffee table and four pillows in my VW Squareback on the way back from town. In June, I took a group of high school students to Daytona Beach. There were seven persons in the car as well as the food and paraphernalia they took along. These two examples stand out as exaggerated cases of the kinds of activities involved in the field work.

In the course of the research, I went wherever informant's business took us. The traveling gave us time to talk and for me to witness their patterns in various social agencies. The activities were varied, on different occasions I was at the jail, public health departments,

clinics, the university, the community college, innumerable places of business and entertainment in the towns and communities within 100 miles of Edge Crossing. The car was one of the most valuable research tools I had and I drove about 24,000 miles during the field work.

In addition to long distance travel, the car was useful in going to the scattered homes in the community. I visited and talked with informants daily or weekly depending on the situation. I rarely stayed in a home less than 15 minutes even if I was just dropping off a package or delivering a message. The longest I ever stayed in a home in a 24 hour period was 19 hours. Most of my contacts were between one and three hours. Early in the field work I had to force myself to stay in a home for a half hour, toward the end of the research I had to force myself to leave in an hour and a half so that I could meet with everyone I planned to see on a particular day.

I got a fair sampling of family life and household activities although there are some aspects of household life that were not dramatically clear to me. I did not spend a lot of time in homes when young husbands or boyfriends were there. I perceived non-verbal cues that I was obstructing the normal flow of events. At times I made myself stay to observe interactions but the males eventually left. When I felt uncomfortable I did not stay more than a half hour. From my knowledge of household activities and the things women say and joke about I think it is fairly common for a couple to have sexual relations after the man comes home from work. Informants sometimes kidded me about leaving to go home "to get rested up" before my husband got home. There was joking among women about sending the children outside, to the store or threatening them with a switching if they came in the house.

when they were engaged with males. In terms of intimate male-female relations I relied on what women said they did rather than on observations of physical contact.

The research methodology was fairly unstructured and evolved as opportunities for increasing involvement and participation occurred. In the beginning I was extremely cautious to offend no one, focused on older women and information that was fairly easy to obtain. Later I developed relationships with younger women and became involved in their activities. The initial focus on older women revealed their ideas and beliefs about younger women and their behavior. It gave me a sound basis from which to interact with youth and avoid entanglements in activities that could endanger my position in the community. Throughout the research I always took advantage of opportunities to be involved in community activities and with females. I worked into situations as my anxiety level lowered enough so that I could function. In time I was able to talk to informants about how uncomfortable I was at the beginning of the research and we laughed at my apprehensions.

The field work began in November, 1971, and continued through the end of December, 1972. Throughout the research I tried to meet my domestic and research responsibilities simultaneously. Most anthropologists live in the community they study and since I did not an explanation is in order. In November, 1971, I had two daughters, four months and three years in age. I considered several alternatives which would enable me to meet all of my responsibilities. At the beginning of the research I chose not to live in the community because I would have to find a baby sitter there and there was no available housing that would meet our needs. Later, I chose not to live in the community because



transportation requests would have interfered with the collection and recording of data. I do not require that my husband, who has supported my endeavors, participate in all of my activities. I had difficulty adjusting to the demands of field work and I did not want to subject him to the same problems when he had professional responsibilities to meet. Living in the community without my husband was unacceptable to me personally and would have placed me in an untenable position.

I strongly feel that the results of the research would have been about the same if I had lived in the community but I undoubtedly would have had to learn to interact with males more effectively.

The fact that I had two children gave me a sound basis of communication with women who relate easily to the problems of motherhood. During the research I fell into a pattern that worked out satisfactorily. I spent the day in Edge Crossing and wrote up my field notes in the evening after the children were asleep. When I was detained in the community, returned in the evening or on the weekend, my husband took care of the children. Whenever it was necessary, I stayed in Edge Crossing to see an event through to completion. Informants knew that I was married and had children. They seemed to relate easily to my desire to be at home during the early evening. They were more puzzled that my husband permitted me so much freedom and asked me whether he knew what I did. They seemed impressed that he stayed with our children, most fathers they know are not willing to baby sit while women visit or go out. It took some time for people I did not know well to identify my role. They thought I was a teacher, social worker or employed on one of the OEO projects.

The schedule I kept left little time for frivolity except with informant-friends. I enjoyed the relaxing, joking, travelling, gossiping and child care that occupied their time. The drive to and from Edge Crossing was time consuming but I usually taped field notes while driving home. Throughout the research I needed time to reflect on my feelings about myself, informants, events that occurred and to plan for future inquiry. I was able to do this while driving.

The exit from the field was more easily accomplished because informants thought of me as a person with an identity in the community and beyond it. Although I usually saw informants in their homes some of them visited my home. My having a role apart from the community helped restrict the dependency relationships that developed. I am still in the community irregularly to attend church services and to visit friends. I maintain almost daily contact with one girl and another woman calls me when she needs transportation or other assistance. I expect that my contacts in the community will be maintained as long as I live in this area. Some informants became friends, distinct from me in various ways, but personal involvements that are more than professional relationships. I am amazed at the amount of time required to think through the research and prepare a unified presentation. The humor that pervaded the field work, the jokes, the laughable miscommunications and bonds of friendship the women and I shared are not brought out. Since the presentation focuses on youth, most of the material on cultural change, history and practices and beliefs surrounding pregnancy and birth are not included. It proved impossible to organize all the material in one lucid presentation.

The question may remain, did the researcher discern reality and is it communicated in the manuscript? The researcher understands how females plan, respond and behave and can accurately predict their behavior in a wide variety of situations. I believe that the process of female adolescent maturation is accurately described.

## APPENDIX B

### DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Materials for the geographical area included in the research are not available but a demographic profile is provided through the use of materials for the rural area encompassing Edge Crossing. The boundaries of two Enumeration Districts and County Census Divisions cross through Edge Crossing. It is necessary to combine the materials from two Enumeration Districts to obtain the demographic data in B-2 and B-3 (see below). Materials from two County Census Divisions are combined to obtain the educational, occupational and income data in B-4, B-5 and B-6. Vital statistics are available only for the county as a unit and are utilized in B-1, B-7, B-8, B-9 and B-10.

The U.S. Census is probably the most accurate material available but some of the data may not accurately reflect the composition of the community. The white population is reported to be 2,736 persons for the two Enumeration Districts while there are 1,019 Negroes (U.S. Census 1970: Count one). There are at least four other black communities in these two Enumeration Districts similar in size to Edge Crossing. I estimate the population of Edge Crossing to be about 500 persons; I know the names of 310 residents. Because the U.S. Census is the most accurate material available it is presented as a point of reference. "Negro" and "non-White" are used in the text to conform to the tables.

taken from available sources. Figures refer to Negroes and to 1970 unless otherwise specified. Column percentages do not always sum 100 because they are rounded to the nearest tenth percent.

	<u>Total</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Non-White</u>
1960	32,200	22,300	9,900
1970	36,400	26,600	9,800
Population gain or loss 1960-70	4,200	4,300	- 100

Figure B-1. Midyear population estimates 1960 and 1970 (Florida 1970:1).

Age in years	Number and percent of persons			
	Males	%	%	Females
65 and over	40	7.96	10.83	56
55-64	31	6.17	7.35	38
45-54	30	5.96	6.39	33
35-44	33	6.57	9.09	47
25-34	44	8.76	9.47	49
15-24	103	20.51	17.98	93
5-14	159	31.67	26.69	138
under 5	62	12.35	12.18	63
Total	602	99.97	99.97	1,019

Figure B-2. Population by age in years and sex (U.S. Census 1970: Count One).

Marital status	Number of Males	Percent of Males	Number of Females	Percent of Females
Now married (excludes separated)	146	51.0	150	44.9
Widowed	14	4.9	57	17.1
Divorced	8	2.8	8	2.4
Separated	12	4.2	20	6.0
Never married	106	37.1	99	29.7
Total	286	100.0	334	100.1

Figure B-3. Population over 14 years of age by sex and marital status (U.S. Census 1970: Count One).

Education	Number of Males	Number of Females	Total
No school years Completed:	48	27	75
Elementary			
1-4 years	111	74	185
5-6 years	26	62	88
7 years	28	33	61
8 years	27	41	68
High school			
1-3 years	26	78	104
4 years	54	29	83
College			
1-3 years	4	32	36
4 years	0	8	8
5 years or over	12	20	32
Total	336	404	740

Figure B-4. Population 25 years old and over by sex and years of school completed (U.S. Census 1970: Count Four).

	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Technical and kindred workers:						
teachers	6	1.9	31	14.0	37	6.9
all others	0	0.0	8	3.6	8	1.5
Managers and administrators except farm	11	3.5	0	0.0	11	2.0
Sales workers	0	0.0	5	2.3	5	0.9
Clerical and kindred workers	0	0.0	9	4.1	9	1.7
Craftsmen, foreman and kindred workers	35	11.1	5	2.3	40	7.4
Operatives, except transport	64	20.3	20	9.0	84	15.6
Transport and equipment operatives	33	10.4	3	1.4	36	6.7
Laborers, except farm	97	30.7	0	0.0	97	18.0
Farmers and farm managers	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Farm laborers and foremen	29	9.2	25	11.3	54	10.0
Service workers, except private household	41	13.0	42	18.9	83	15.4
Private household workers	0	0.0	74	33.3	74	13.8
Total	316	100.1	222	100.0	538	99.9

Figure B-5. Employed persons 16 years old and over by occupation and sex (U.S. Census 1970: Count Four).

Annual income	Number of Males	Cumulative percent	Cumulative percent	Number of Females
\$10,000-14,999	7	100.0		0
\$9,000-9,999	7	98.5		0
\$8,000-8,999	6	97.1	100.0	12
\$7,000-7,999	10	95.9	97.9	8
\$6,000-6,999	10	93.9	96.5	7
\$5,000-5,999	57	91.9	95.4	13
\$4,000-4,999	40	80.5	93.1	10
\$3,000-3,999	35	72.4	91.4	27
\$2,000-2,999	58	65.4	86.9	45
\$1,000-1,999	56	53.8	79.2	77
\$1-999 or loss	119	42.5	66.1	184
Without income	93	18.8	34.8	205
Totals	498			588

Figure 8-6. Population 14 years old and over by sex and income (U.S. Census 1970: Count Four).



## Percent Illegitimate of Total Life Births

	1970			1964-1966 Average		
	Total	White	Non-White	Total	White	Non-White
Florida	15.0	6.5	41.4	11.9	4.7	30.9
County	19.4	3.7	48.7	17.0	2.6	41.1

Figure B-7. Resident illegitimate live birth rates per 100 total live births (Florida 1970:15).

## Birth Rate

	1970			1964-1966 Average		
	Total	White	Non-White	Total	White	Non-White
Florida	16.8	15.1	26.2	18.2	15.8	30.2
County	18.2	16.2	23.5	20.6	18.0	27.1

Figure B-8. Resident birth rates per 1,000 population (Florida 1970:3).

## Mortality Rates

	1970			1964-1966 Average		
	Total	White	Non-White	Total	White	Non-White
Florida	21.4	17.7	32.9	26.1	22.2	43.6
County	22.7	16.2	34.8	36.7	24.2	57.5

Figure B-9. Resident infant mortality rates per 1,000 live births (Florida 1970:22).

Age of mother in years	1959 <sup>a</sup>			1970		
	White	Cumulative %	Non- White	White	Cumulative %	Non- White
Less than 15	3	0.1	4	0	0.0	4
15	4	1.3	12	3	0.1	7
16	11	3.4	19	10	3.0	13
17	19	7.0	14	19	7.4	16
18	29	12.4	21	30	14.4	23
19	40	19.9	27	31	21.6	20
20-24	185	54.7	89	178	62.9	78
25-29	110	75.4	64	101	86.3	35
30-34	83	91.0	53	38	95.1	16
35-39	37	97.9	27	17	99.1	12
40-44	11	100.0	6	4	100.0	5
45 and over	0		0	0		0
Not stated	0		1	0		1
Total births	532		337	431		230

Figure 8-10. Resident births by age of mother 1959 and 1970 (Florida 1959:11-12; 1970:13-14).

<sup>a</sup>Statistics for 1960 unavailable.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Molly Crocker Dougherty, born in Atlanta, Georgia, on June 30, 1944, has lived in Florida most of her life. After graduation from Andrew Jackson Senior High School in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1962, she received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (1965) and a Master's in Nursing (1968) from the University of Florida. In 1969, she was admitted to the graduate program in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Florida and was supported by H.E.W. Special Nurse Fellowships. She is a member of Sigma Theta Tau, a National Nursing Honor Society and Phi Kappa Phi, a National Scholastic Honorary.

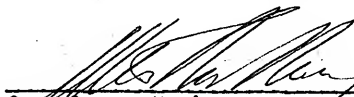
Employment as a Registered Nurse in hospital maternity units in Rochester, New York, Hendersonville, North Carolina, and Gainesville, Florida, stimulated her interest in childbearing, maturation and population. Edmund Thomas Dougherty, Jr. and she, married in 1965, are the parents of two daughters, Ann Margaret and Laura Lynn, four and one years of age respectively.

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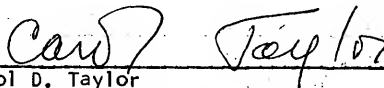
G. Alexander Moore, Chairman  
Associate Professor of Anthropology

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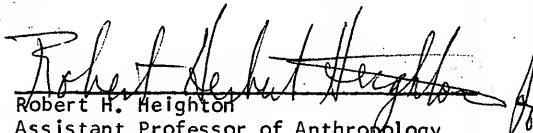
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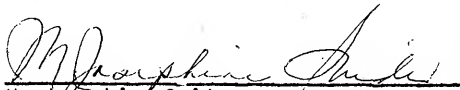
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This dissertation was submitted to the Department of Anthropology in the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate Council, and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

August, 1973

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